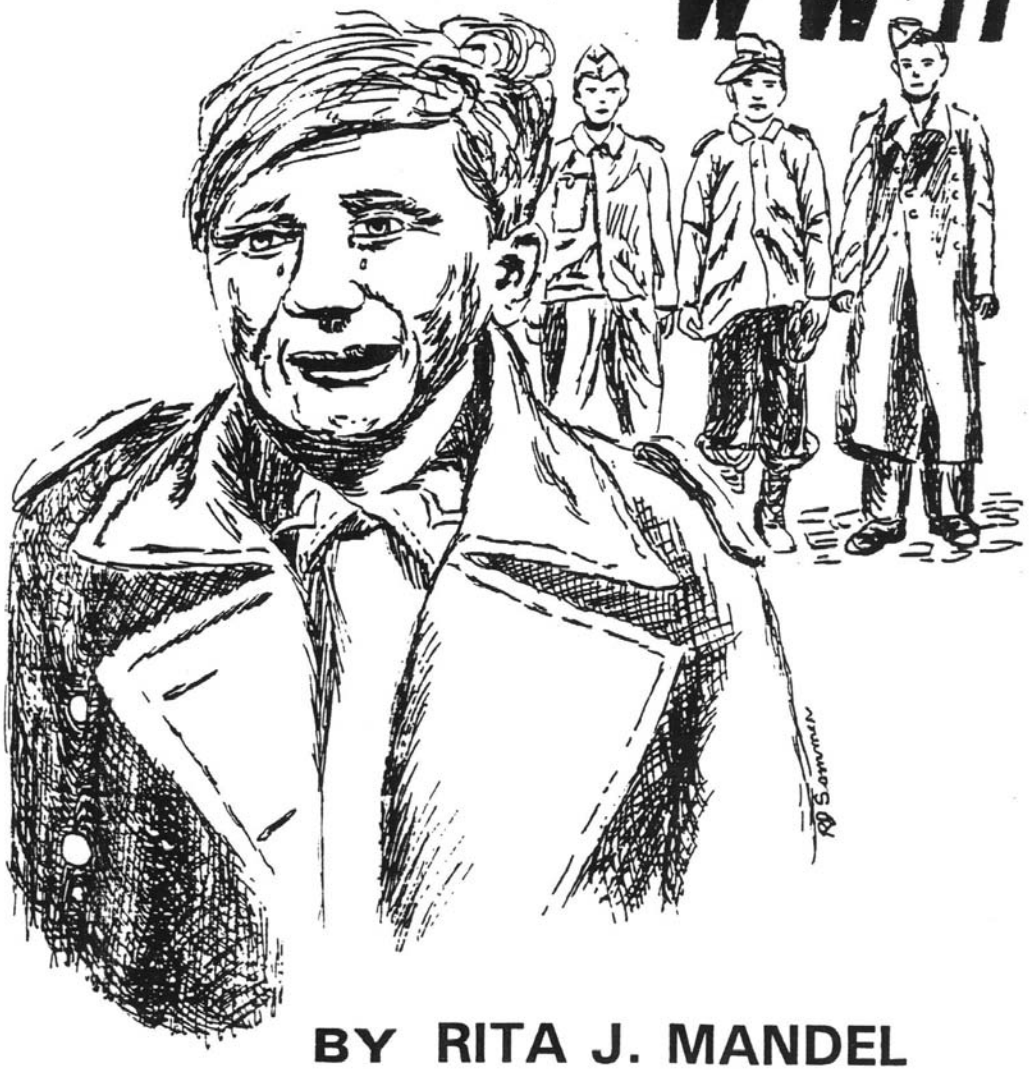
CHILDREN OF WW II



BY RITA J. MANDEL

CHILDREN OF WORLD WAR II

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: RITA J. MANDEL

Rita was born on October 20, 1938 in Hamburg Germany. Because her father Irwin Sommer was Jewish, her mother Flory was not permitted to go to a hospital and Rita was born premature in her parents bed. Her father, a businessman, was put in forced labor by the nazis. Her mother hid her, her sister, and later her father from the nazis. Her mother's bravery saved the family.

After the war, they spent time in displaced persons' camps. In 1950 they emigrated to the Unites States under the sponsorship of an international Jewish relief agency. They settled in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where her father worked as a welder, a trade he was forced to learn in a forced labor camp in Germany. Rita was 12 years old when she arrived in America. She could speak no English. Nonetheless, at age 19, she graduated from high school and worked as a secretary at the University of Pittsburgh. A year later, she married Jim Mandel.

In 1967, Rita, Jim, and their two children, Belinda and Bob moved to Syracuse, New York. Rita earned a bachelor's degree from Syracuse University. She worked as an interior designer and a medical illustrator for the VA Medical Center. She also was a painter, working in both oil and water colors.

In 1987, breast cancer was found in Rita. Again hardship came into her life. Rita bravely fought the cancer with surgery and chemotherapy. But when the cancer returned for the third time in 1990, she retired from the VA Medical center to spend more time with her family and her painting. Rita died on September 11, 1991 at the age of 52.

Rita was courageous, outgoing, and loving throughout her life. She always smiled, never complained and was never afraid to try something new. It was this courage that enabled her to accomplish so much in life and to help so many others. Although her early years were very hard due

to the prejudice and cruelty of the Nazis, her zest for life was apparent even at a very early age. She did not let these hardships prevent her from having a positive attitude towards life and people. Even though she had a relatively short life, she accomplished much and she touched the hearts of many.

Although Rita writes of war and grim times, she makes the times sparkle with life as she saw them. Her positive attitude and bravery helped her survive the Holocaust. She hopes that no reader will have to experience the same, but rather digest the sad experiences she had through her words and illustrations and appreciate 'peace' times as the 'best' times.

This is her first book. She feels it needed to be written so that people can understand that hatred, prejudice, and war cause hardship and death for all children. It is hoped that this book can result in more love and less hatred between people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - THE CHILDREN OF WORLD WAR II

My heartfelt thanks to all who participated, and permitted me to interview them, even though pain often resulted when they recalled events from their past. Some preferred to stay anonymous for personal reasons. Joe and other Holocaust survivors wish to publicize their experiences to prevent any future Holocaust recurrence. The Holocaust survivors were silent for nearly 40 years before speaking out, due to their fear of retaliation. They wished to forget their nightmares, their pain of lost loved ones, and grim memories.

My sincere thanks to my husband Jim, my children and our friends, who encouraged me to write this book. A special thanks to all the youths: Jared, Jeremy and John, who criticized my book constructively. Thanks to our professional friends, Steve, Pat, and others for taking time to read the material and improve its contents and clarity.

May the readers find in this book enjoyable, useful and rewarding information to better their lives and those of future generations. May it prevent our wonderful youths from joining gangs, cults and hate groups, while looking for approval and love. May this book be a tool to them, their parents and their teachers. May 'peace' be in the reader's heart and mind always. "Shalom" (Peace).

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

The book is based on true events as they occurred to real children of World War II in Europe. There are only six chapters in this book. In chapters 2,3,4, and 5, the lives of four young people in three European countries during World War II, are described. Some of their names were changed to protect the privacy of the individuals. The last chapter contains a factual summary of some of the immense harm that the events of World War II had on both children and adults.

The children's war experiences range from different view points, due to their ages, religions, cultures and degree of oppression. Two of the children are Christians and two are Jewish. All of the children suffer and face death during the war, no matter which country they are living in, or which country is winning the war.

Rita is a German Jew, caught up in the war as a baby and young child. She grows up fearfully behind closed doors in Hamburg Germany. Bombs, prejudism, tragedies, and hiding for her life seemed normal to her. Due to the bravery of her mother, their small family (father, mother, and two small girls) avoid being captured and sent to a concentration camp. They suffer many hardships during the war. After the war, they dream of coming to America to escape the persecution of the Germans. In 1951 after living in a displaced persons camp, they finally immigrate to America.

Joe, teenager in Czechoslovakia, is ostracized by his peers and government because he is Jewish. When his parents escape the Nazis, he and his brother Herman are left behind. While hiding in the woods to prevent being captured and sent to a concentration camp, Joe joins the Underground, a small army of heroic men and women fighting the invading German army. Although he is eventually captured and sent to a concentration camp, he

survives the war. He immigrates to Canada after the war and later comes to the United States.

Anthony is a nine year old Catholic living in Italy. Because his father is working in the U.S.A., he is the only man in the house and has to carry the burden of looking after his mother and two sisters. He realizes that the war is grim, painful, and very dangerous. Anthony survives the war and comes to America in 1952.

Gerdie is a son of a typical German couple. He joins the Hitler Youth club and becomes a victim of Hitler's philosophy and the war. When he is 17 years old, he enlists in the German army. Within the his first year in the army, he dies of dysentery in Czechoslovakia.

All but Gerdie, are survivors of World War II and the Holocaust. They were the lucky few, who lived to tell the true stories of their sad experiences. The personal accounts of these four young people is documented to prevent future hatred, ignorance and war tragedies due to prejudice. The survivors hurt so deeply and only share their past for one reason. They pray, "The Holocaust will never be repeated."

This book is meant to reach out to the 10 to 13 year old youths, who seek to know what life is all about. It is for those with personal dilemmas, dissatisfactions or tragedies in their lives. It is for the lonely, who seek youths groups, cults, or adventurous futures. It is for those critical of others, who do not realize the necessity of accepting the vast variety of people it takes to run this beautiful and efficient world. It is for those, who choose not to speak for justice, but leave it for "others". It is for those who seek leadership. It is for those who glorify the soldier and war. It is for the revolutionary and the meek youths. It offers honest, easy reading of war on a personal level. It is entertaining, exciting, without

too many boring dates, grotesque details, and unnecessary dramatization. A history book is recommended as a follow-up.

On the front cover of the book, young German soldiers are shown. At the end of W.W. II, the Germans sent 13 to 17 year old boys to fight the war. This was done because too many adult soldiers were wounded, killed or missing. The youths fighting the war, were trained like robots, and were very disciplined. But they lacked the mental and physical strength to bear the heavy war burdens placed on them by their arrogant Nazi leaders. They broke down under the grueling weather conditions and dangers of war. Many died or were wounded. Hitler did not care for their personal fitness or the harm done to them. He only cared about winning the war, conquering other people's lands and possessions, regardless of the injustices and harm that resulted.

On the back cover of the book, young children are shown along with a poem, "Children of Love". For the world is to be a good place to live, people must be kind, helpful, and loving to everyone, no matter what their race or religion is, or what country they are from. Those who let injustices occur, without speaking against it, are as guilty as those who commit the injustice. It is hoped that this book will help children to choose love instead of hate and also help them to stand up against hate and discrimination.

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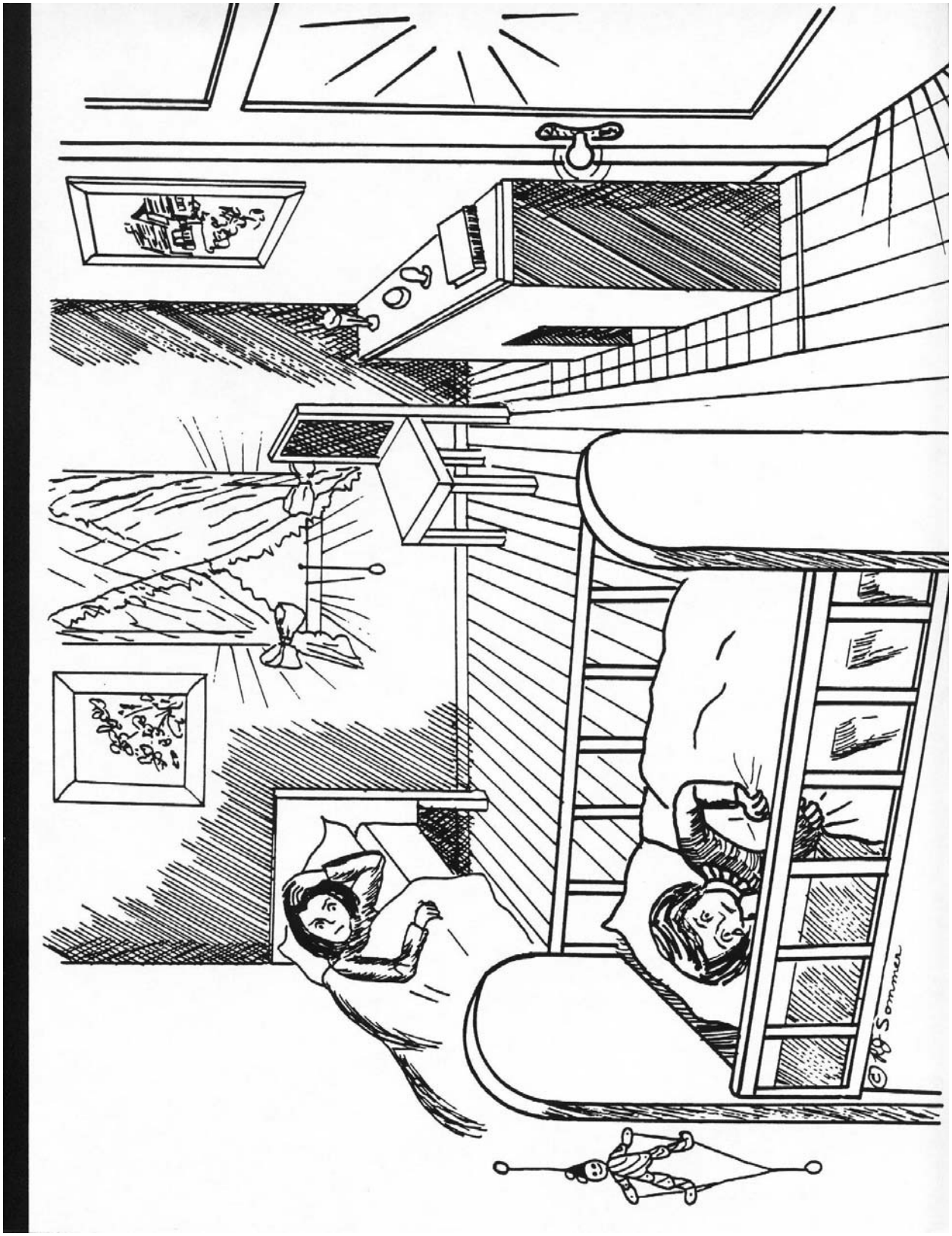
CHAPTER 2 - GERMAN RITA, WHO GREW UP TOO FAST

Rita was only seven, when the war was over in 1945, but she already lived through a life time worth of experiences during World War II. She was born at home, with the help of a midwife, because Jews were not permitted to be born in a hospital. While her mother, Flory, was a Christian, father, Erwin, was a Jew. That made Rita and her one year older sister, Elaine, 'Mischlinge' or mixed blood racially. According to the Nazis' definition, anyone who even had one Jewish grandparent, was considered to be Jewish.

Just two weeks after Rita was born in October 1938, 'Crystal Night' occurred. It was the night of horrendous mischief done by unruly Nazis. Regular German citizens behaved like lynch mobs, wandering through the streets with torches and weapons. The mobs were instigated by the Nazi government, to arouse hatred and unite the people against the Jews. On November 9, 1938, 'Crystal Night', the mobs throughout German cities were rampaging, destroying, burning and plundering Jewish businesses, synagogues and homes. The Nazi Police and SS officers just stood by watching and enjoying the destruction. The few Jews, who dared protest or protect their property, were killed by the mobs. After 200 synagogues and most of the Jewish businesses were destroyed, the Nazi Police arrested 20,000 Jews and made them pay for the damage the Germans caused. The streets were littered with debris, blood, but mostly glass. That is why it was called 'Crystal Night'.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Rita's mother, Flory, was brave when she married Rita's father on April 16, 1936, because laws were passed to restrict Jews from any freedom, citizenship or even to enter a mixed marriage. Flory was brave because she had a heart for Erwin, whom she dated off and on for nearly seven years. When he appealed to her sympathetically, "Flory, if you don't marry me, the Nazis will kill me", she knew he was right. She thought he would have a better chance in a mixed marriage. Because of her bravery, the family survived the war and the persecution of the Nazis.

knew he was right. She thought he would have a better chance in a mixed marriage. Because of her bravery, the family survived the war and the persecution of the Nazis.

Flory, Erwin and baby, Elaine, tried to flee the Nazis through emigration to Shanghai, China, the only country open to them. Their furniture was already packed in a large crate at Bremen Harbor. But they missed their opportunity to evacuate Germany by eight days. The Nazis closed the harbors, due to the war. Then Flory and Erwin paid a large sum of money in the 'black market' to enter Holland, but they had to turn back. No one met them at the border, as previously promised. They were afraid of getting shot in the dark without help. The feeling of helplessness, anger and frustration was overwhelming as they returned to the city of Hamburg, Germany. They were facing the reality of the war.

Flory became the sole bread winner, while Erwin was a 'forced laborer' without pay. She was mother and housewife during the morning hours, and a working woman in the afternoons and evenings. Erwin came home late at night after welding for the Nazis as a 'forced laborer'. He was extremely fatigued by the hard work as well as discouraged and terrorized by the Nazis. Often in the late evening Flory and Erwin just sat together, holding hands and sobbing. They

felt all alone and helpless. Rita pretended not to see them sitting in a dark corner of the room. Even as a young child, she realized they wanted some privacy.

Rita and Elaine had to take care of themselves, starting at the tender ages of two and three years. They were told by their mother, "Stay in your beds, without making any noise, while I am at work." Somehow the urgency in her voice seemed like a desperate warning to the girls. Neither of the girls forgot their mother's warning, regardless of their fears of noises or the curiosity of the chatter of children's voices at their window during the long sunny afternoons. Their mother, Flory, had pulled down the window shade for privacy. Everyday they were reminded before Flory left, "Do not get up or make any noise, while I'm gone. Be good." Rita and Elaine were too scared to make any noise or talk above a whisper to each other.

One day, while they were left alone, there was a banging at their front door. The girls cringed with fear, but as they were instructed, did not answer the door. Then again came the loud knocking, as though fists were used. The girls held their breath, hoping whoever it was would go away. They feared the worst, "Perhaps the Nazis were coming to pick them up"? At night when their mother returned from work, the girls were quivering with excitement, as they told of the fearful experience they had. Their mother was aghast, but did not show it. After she investigated the doormat, she said, "It was probably Mrs. Weber, our neighbor, who swept all the dirt under our door mat again. Her broom probably banged against our door accidentally." The girls tried to believe their mother, calmed down and went to sleep peacefully.

The family lived in an old apartment that their Jewish Uncle Albert left them. Uncle Albert was a single man, but he enjoyed watching the little girls play. He shared in their delight as they had

an indoor Easter egg hunt. Uncle Albert was fearful of the Nazis and hung himself before the Nazis could pick him up. The first floor apartment was cold as there was no central heat. Each room had a small gas heater. In the living room the gas pipe came up through the wooden floor, leaving space enough around the hole to permit mice to enter. After Flory caught several mice and even small rats, she had an exterminator close it off with broken glass and a collar fitting. Rita recalls seeing a rat in the toilet bowl. But most often, she saw the image of a 'skull' in the toilet bowl.

Perhaps it was an 'omen' or just general fear of the war conditions.

The family used to have a new apartment and a successful advertising business, that Flory helped to build. The Nazis took away both the apartment and business. Flory felt lucky to be living in Uncle Albert's apartment, but missed him very much. The other tenants were all Christians. One elderly Jewish couple, who lived on the same street, was arrested and taken to the concentration camp. Rita felt lucky to have received some of their mementos, a white porcelain figurine and some crystal. She treasured them in memory of the couple.

Rita recalls her mother's sadness for the couple, when she said, "They never did anyone any harm. Why? " Then Rita's Uncle Philip and Aunt Sophie were taken away by the Nazis. Rita recalled a time when there was a special children's play of 'Snow White' and her mother tried to get tickets. Although it was unlawful for Jews to attend any theatre, she risked it, standing in line for tickets for a long time. It seemed like hours to Rita and Elaine, who were waiting inside a very crowded theater lobby, as their mother had instructed.

After a while, four year old Elaine said, "We have been waiting too long." She then told Rita, "We'll visit Uncle Philip." And off they went in search of his apartment. Miraculously, Elaine recognized the streets and correct address even though she did not know how to read. When finally they reached the third floor apartment, Uncle Philip was aghast to find that the little girls had been wandering through the busy city streets all alone. He loved the girls as though they were his own. He was surprised that Elaine was able to find his apartment. With tears in his eyes, he scolded them both, "You must never do this again. Don't ever leave your mother." Grabbing his coat and the girls' small hands, he walked them home to a very worried but now relieved mother. It was only short time after that when Uncle Philip and Aunt Sophie were taken away by the Nazis.

When Rita was five years old, her mother, Flory, who adored her children, tried to protect them by having them baptized. Even the minister, who baptized the girls, was in danger of going to the concentration camp for helping them. Most Germans kept their distance from getting involved with Jews, because of the strict unjust Nazi laws.

Flory thought that life was a continuing disappointment, except for the happiness she received from her children. Often Flory spent nights sewing, instead of sleeping. She could not afford the outrageous prices of clothes, but she wanted her girls to look extra special. In the mornings, the girls would play with their very limited few toys. Flory enjoyed listening to them. Often Elaine would pretend to sell groceries, while Rita pretended to buy them. They also would pretend to be their mother and their aunt drinking coffee. Sometimes they were permitted to dig

in the backyard. Rita was delighted when she found a worm. She would also sing songs like a canary. When Mrs. Weber, the Nazi neighbor, threw out soiled cotton puffs with blood, Flory discontinued even the short backyard 'fun time' for the children. Flory could not take a chance in arguing with a neighbor, when her family's life was at stake. Flory knew that Mrs. Weber was a heartless Nazi.

More and more restrictions were enforced, more blood was shed in the streets and Flory began to worry about Erwin's safety. He told her, "Today another buddy of mine was picked up, right where I was welding empty gasoline drums". The welding was taught to him by the Nazis, who needed the drums for war supplies. This was after his business was confiscated. His new forced labor was dangerous work. Often the empty gasoline drums, that needed welding would explode. Now his life was even more in danger, knowing that he too could be going to the concentration camp without ever saying 'good bye' to his family. Both Erwin and Flory cried often, after the girls went to bed. They supported each other regardless of their fear, their exhaustion, and the frustration they felt.

Flory was a clever and brave woman. She decided it was time to hide Erwin in a nearby lumberyard. The owner of the lumberyard agreed, although he also feared for his life if the Nazis found Erwin there. Apparently, he was a more God fearing, than Nazi fearing person, who knew right from wrong. He had sympathy with Flory's predicament. Erwin, the father, was hidden for a year in the uninsulated wood planked attic above the lumberyard office. Erwin had to be exceptionally quiet during the days. He thought to himself, "no walking, coughing or any unnecessary movement, in case someone would overhear me". Flory was exceptionally

brave, while fearful of the dangers, when she visited him nightly with food, blankets and a newspaper. The attic was freezing cold during the winter and extremely hot during the summer, but it was a 'haven of safety' for Erwin. He was appreciative of the 'haven' and Flory's loyalty to him. Yet he wished the war come to an end already. He was very cold and very lonely. At times he thought, "I'm going to go crazy staying here."

The plain clothed Nazi policemen often shocked Flory when they knocked at her door at anytime, day or night, asking loudly, "WHERE IS YOUR HUSBAND?" To which Flory would simply reply, "I don't know, he deserted me a while ago." Often the nasty policeman would say, "Well, then I guess you must be lonely." or "Why wait for him, a Jew?" She somehow managed to be tactful and keep her fears hidden, while getting rid of the policeman. Every night when she visited Erwin, she had to have a good excuse for walking in the streets during curfew hours. Somehow, she escaped from being interrogated or even noticed. She was also working to keep the family alive, and did all this with tremendous success.

Perhaps the 'coal black' nights helped Flory. The streets were kept extremely dark, no street lamps were on. All windows were fitted with total blackout shades, to keep any light from filtering to the outside. This was strictly enforced during the Allied bombing period. The Allies were to be confused and not see the cities, their bombing targets.

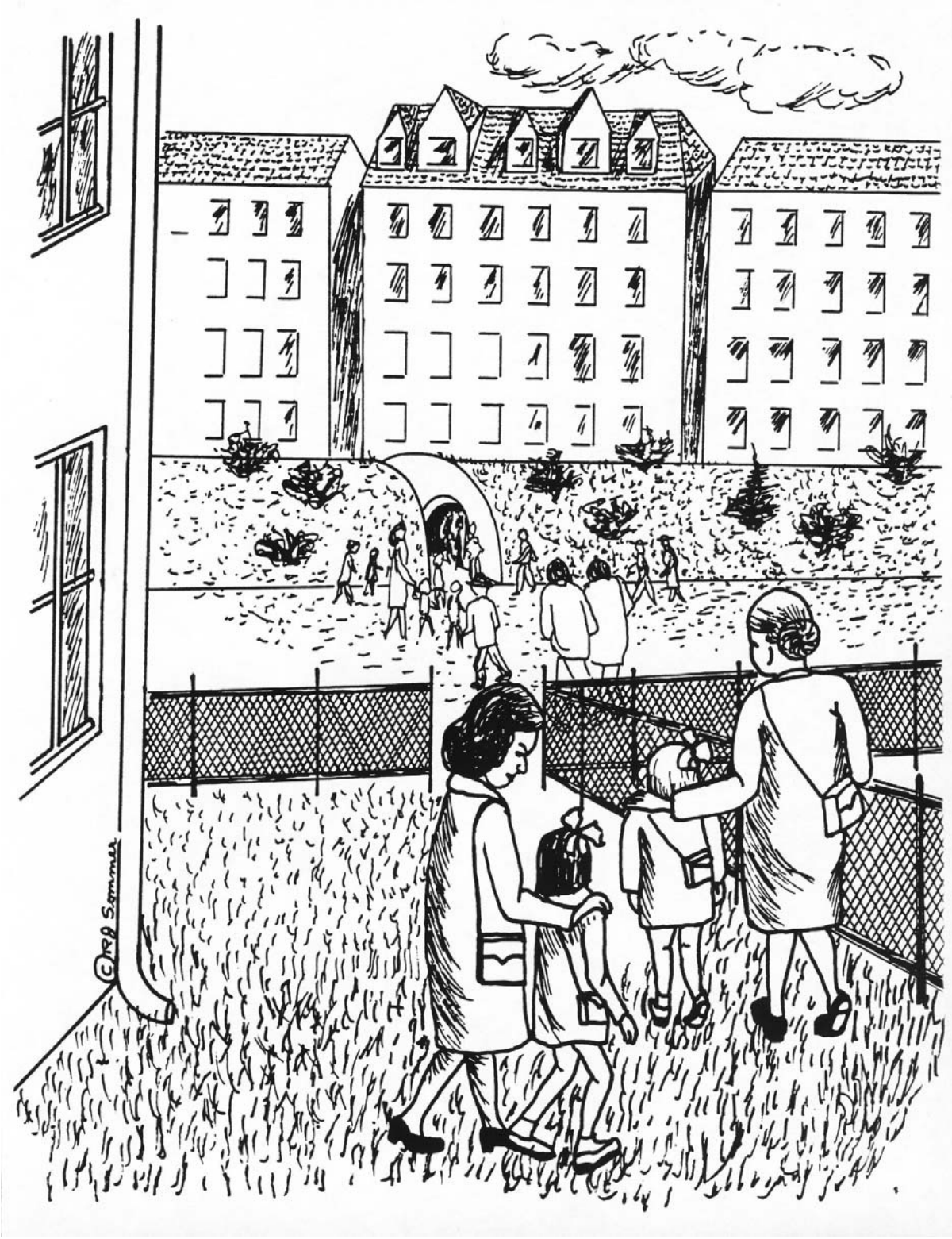
Often at night, Allied (British and U.S.) bombs were hurling down on the city of Hamburg, while Rita was sleeping. German sirens alerted the people to seek shelter. Rita and her family were startled and dazed. She remembers, "The bombs sounded just like fireworks, swishing

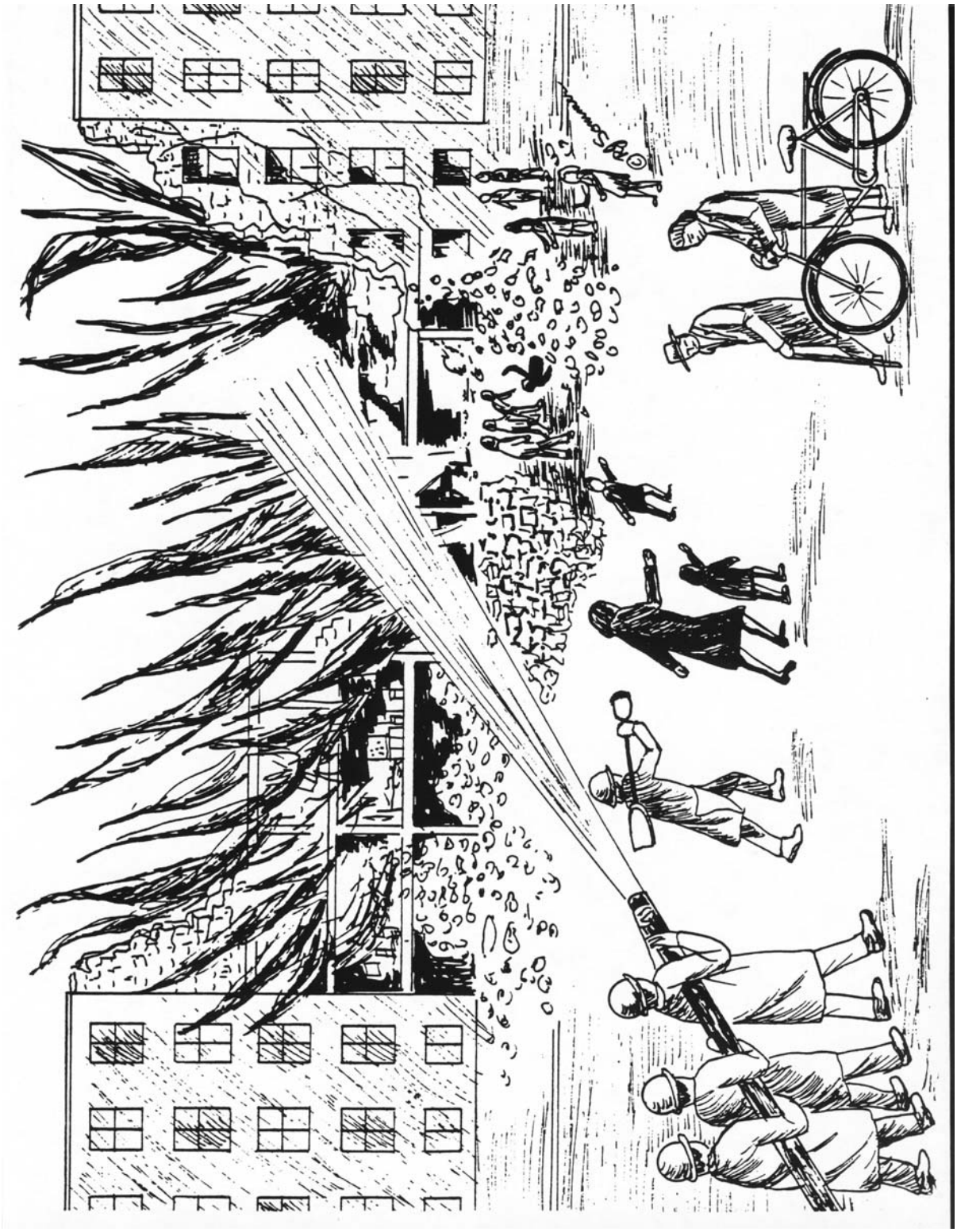
down rather than up, then exploding with a crackling sound of thunder and large fires followed." Only she did not enjoy the fireworks. They were frightening, caused explosions and great fires.

When there was an air-raid, Flory awoke the children and dressed them in nightgowns, coats and shoes. They then ran hurriedly to the 'bunker' (shelter), behind their backyard. Erwin was not permitted to take cover in the shelter at anytime. Flory and the children, barely tolerated by their neighbors, had to sit in the cold, dank, long underground bomb shelters. The thick walled cement shelter was built prior to the war. It had heavy vaulted ceilings, and thick metal doors like those of a safe or vault. Seating was arranged in four long rows in each compartment of the block long shelter. Until Rita actually went inside, she never realized the shelter was there. It was covered like a hill with dirt and shrubs to prevent direct bombing hits. The windowless structure seemed 'eerie' to Rita. The minimum ceiling light, cold moist air, its musty smell and unfriendly people sitting in fear of getting bombed, made the shelter a very unpleasant place.

Previous to Erwin's hiding at the lumberyard, he was a 'forced laborer'. In addition to working long days during the day as a welder, he worked at night as a fireman. He had to put out fires and rescue people from burning, collapsing buildings. Once he was accidentally hit with debris and trapped in the ruin of a collapsed building. No one cared enough to help him escape. However, Flory looked for him after each bombing raid. After the sirens alerted the people for a second time, meaning 'all is clear', Flory looked for Erwin and found him trapped in a collapsed building. She got help quickly for him, while the girls helped and sobbed, fearing for their father's welfare. Somehow without a hospital or doctor, he survived, but feared the war even more.

Flory was a 'guardian angel', who nursed Erwin and the girls through many critical situations. Somehow God gave her the right tools. When Rita was less than seven years old, one of her pierced ears got infected from new earrings. Every night her mother applied medication and





cradled her until the ear healed, leaving some scars. There was no time for children's diseases, like chicken pox or measles, nor shots available until after the war. Since Rita's family, as Jews, were not permitted to visit a doctor or hospital, Flory was solely responsible for her family's welfare.

Then one day shortly before the war ended, miraculously the girls' grandmother Else, who lived in Berlin, East Germany, appeared. She was totally emaciated and fatigued from her ordeal. She told of her escape, "The Russians came into my apartment and tore it apart. When they saw a picture of Gerdie (her grandchild), in an army uniform, they were furious and screamed at me." Else ran away with nothing except the clothes on her back. She crawled under barbed wire fences, ran across field after field until she got to Hamburg.

Grandma Else was a welcome sight for Rita and Elaine. She was full of the love and joy the children so desperately needed. Rita remembers how she made the Christmas holiday a special day. Previously, Flory and the children tried to celebrate Christmas, the best they could, often without presents. They lit some candles on a pine wreath bound in red ribbons, hung from their living room ceiling light. The girls were so excited and enjoyed the pleasant fragrance of the fresh pine and candles. Often Erwin sat in another section of the living room, lighting the candles of a Jewish candelabra and saying a Jewish prayer. But this Christmas was extra special with Grandma Else. A Swedish sailor gave Flory a simple plastic doll for her children, Grandma Else sewed clothes for the doll, from her own tattered clothes. She also made beautiful carrying cases, with shoulder straps, for the German issued gas masks for whole family. The gas masks were to be used during bomb attacks.

Grandma Else was always a special lady to Rita. Rita called her "Omie" (German nickname for grandma) with affection, and ran for her asthma medicine, whenever she needed it. Rita walked many blocks to the drugstore for Omie's medicine. One time Rita recalls, "I tore up a 20 Mark bill ($20), while walking nervously, thinking I was tearing leaves instead." Rita felt so bad, once she realized it, but it was too late to recover it.

When the war was coming to an end, Flory listened to the British radio station, even though listening to a radio was prohibited by the Nazis. A message on the radio announced that the Allied invasion of Germany had started. Flory delighted in the news, but feared the Germans' would retaliate and kill even more Jews. She somehow got train tickets for the family, even though the Nazis did not permit Jews to ride on the trains. Erwin and Elaine left first. The trip was more dangerous for them, since they looked more Jewish because of their dark hair. Flory and Rita, who had blond hair like many Germans, left a few days later by train and joined Erwin and Elaine, who were hiding in the woods with a Jewish family named Sanders. Mr. Sanders was a friend of Erwin. He said to Erwin before leaving Hamburg, early in the war, "You and family can always come and stay with us in an emergency." Flory felt that this was an emergency. The country was in turmoil. At last the Germans felt some fear of retaliation with the Allied troops coming, while Flory and family felt some relief from the constant anxiety and fear.

The Sanders were a warm-hearted family with 10 children, they lived in a one room log cabin. They built a dugout about 100 feet from their cabin. Inside the dugout, they placed an eight foot

by four foot sheet of plywood on the ground to serve as a temporary bed for their 10 small children. They dug a dirt bench for the adults and then covered the entire dugout with logs and foliage, which was both a roof and camouflage for the dugout. Rita remembers the cold moist open dugout, often used throughout the night. She recalls seeing silhouettes of soldiers through the roof of the dugout, stalking the woods with rifles held, ready to shoot at anything that moved. The children in the dugout shelter held their breath. They knew this was 'real' and 'not a game of hide and seek'. They shivered in their thin night clothes and coats from fear and the cold moist night air. The woods were dark, dank and dangerous. In the morning everyone was glad to return to the cabin to warm up by the potbelly stove. They were all chilled from the moist morning dew of the dark woods they called their 'haven of safety'.

The next day after an air attack, a farmer came to tell Mr. Sanders about horses that were hit and killed in the field. He said, "Anyone can go there and help themselves to meat." Mr. Sanders and Erwin went quickly to get some meat. Rita recalls, "It was the best meal she can remember eating during the war. The rich horse meat roast and kidney beans were super special." Many times everyone went without a meal, while in hiding. This was different from their times in Hamburg when they ate mostly vegetables and potatoes once a day and sparingly.

After a month went by, Flory and Erwin decided to move on to meet the Tommies, British soldiers, who were approximately 20 miles away. After walking several days, Rita and her family saw the Tommies. They were friendly, young and most generous with their supplies. Flory explained in sign language, that her husband and family were prisoners of the Nazis, by crossing her forearms. After that the family received a loaf of white bread, tea bags, jars of

jelly, soap and chocolate. The Tommies asked the family to go behind their troops for safety. Rita and her family were delighted with the goodies. They knew it would take time for the British to move on. But at last they felt safe.

Rita and Flory choose the perfect farm house with lots of chickens, geese and ducks to visit. They knocked on the farmhouse door. Flory told a 'white lie' to the farm lady. Flory said, "My family and I were bombed out of our apartment. We are tired and need a place to stay. Can you help us?" The farm lady was surprised, but took them in. She asked, "Where is your husband and other daughter?" Flory said, "Soon they will come." The reason for their deliberate delay was to hide them until Flory made the arrangements, because the farm lady might think they are Jewish, because of their dark hair. The farm lady and children gladly took all of their supplies from the Tommies. But the next day, the farm lady said, "We don't cater to Jewish people, and I can tell your husband is Jewish." Flory could not deny it. She realized, "People will never change, not even when the war is over." Rita and her family left the countryside in an open Army truck driven by the Tommies. It was a bumpy ride back to Hamburg nearly 40 miles away, but far better than walking.

Luckily when they returned to their apartment in Hamburg, it was just the way they left it. Their Omie was waiting and Aunt Edith moved in because her apartment was destroyed by bombs. She was angrier than a bear having cubs. She was still very bitter, having lost her son, Gerdie, to the war. Then she lost her husband, and finally her apartment. As always, she blamed it all on the Jews not the Nazis. Aunt Edith threw the doors, to show her anger during the days and

nights. The entire five story apartment building was glad when she finally moved out into her own new apartment. Rita and Flory felt relief, sighed and said, "At last."

Rita and Elaine were finally permitted to attend the public school, after the war was over. Since they were already seven and eight years old, they had a lot of catching up to do. Flory arranged for an outside tutor to teach the girls reading and writing. But the German children teased them and ostracized them, except for one. Rita befriended a blond girl, looking much like herself, but soon discovered she had lice and so did Rita. It was a painful experience to be shampooed daily, often in cold water and combed out with a very fine comb. During and after the war, baths and shampoos were kept at a minimum to save water and utilities. Only cold water was available at the faucets. A bath required heating many pots of water on the stove.

A little seven year old boy, named Kurt, from a produce store around the corner of the block, befriended Rita with a plum or pear for a few days. Rita was delighted and enjoyed the fresh fruit, but the older children teased him into giving up his friendship with Rita. Apparently Kurt's parents explained the war against the Jews to him. He was so mellow, gentle, and shy, that Rita hardly had time to tell him 'thank you'. He rushed away so quickly, each time he came to visit.

Whenever, Rita and Elaine wanted to play outdoors with the other children, they were teased and ridiculed for their naive ness and being Jewish. Once two brothers teamed up to coax Rita and Elaine into playing with them in the ruins of a building. The sisters were delighted to be accepted. Soon the brothers took advantage of the two girls, by tying up the girls and putting tar

on their brand new coats. The girls felt hurt and ridiculed again, while waiting in the ruins for hours to be released.

When Flory found her girls finally, she was furious. She said, "Now that the war is over, I will not put up with it." She went directly to the mother of the boys and demanded, "You better have those brand new coats cleaned perfectly, or pay me for the cost of the new fabric." Rita never saw her mother that angry before. All the years of aggravation, fear and pain came to the surface.

After the war while her mother was shopping, Rita, who was seven years old, got emotionally carried away. Rita, a budding young artist without paper or pencils, carved into her mother's dining room table by mistake. Rita feared her mother's anger, once she realized what she had done. Rita remembers, "I ran around the dining room table a few times, while my mother pursued me with a bamboo carpet rod. But my mother gave up, because she could not catch me. But she remained angry for a few days." Secretly Rita was proud of the 'lamp post' she carved, but knew better than to carve into the top of the table. Rita had a small excuse for her carving, but her mother was too upset to realize it. Clean drawing paper was nearly impossible to get. Even newspapers were recycled by using them to wrap food items. A quarter pound of sugar was wrapped in a cone shaped newspaper, milk or beer was carried in one's own pitcher. Furniture and clothes were nearly impossible to purchase. Most factories were in ruins.

Rita recalls once after a late night bombing raid, everyone ran to a nearby shoe factory that was burning. Rita found a lot of 'left' shoes and slippers, but not a single 'pair' she could use. To Rita this was pretty funny, seeing two left shoes or slippers on her feet.

Because the Nazi regime had taken away Erwin's advertising business, the new German government permitted him to start another business. But since they could not give him reparations (money) right away, Erwin had to get a loan somewhere. Erwin was lucky that a sympathetic German couple answered his newspaper advertisement and prayers. The Brinkmans offered him a small loan to start a wholesale grocery business, which was extremely successful even though food was rationed. The business office was inside the old apartment where Rita and her family suffered throughout the war. Their warehouse of groceries was in the bunker (shelter), behind the apartment building, where they used to hide during the bombing attacks.

A funny thing happened 'one Sunday morning', Rita recalls. Her father received a phone call from one of the neighbors. The message was, "Someone is locked in the bunker. An arm seems to be waving between the iron bars of the entrance." When Erwin checked, thinking it was a burglar, he was astonished to find Flory. Things were so hectic, that neither he or the girls knew where Flory went. She was locked up all night in the bunker, after working there with a crew of several men. Erwin, Rita and Elaine were very embarrassed not to have known Flory's whereabouts. Flory was a good and busy business woman. Rita admired her strength of character and ingenuity. Being locked in a bunker, helplessly 'just was not her style'.

A few years later, Rita, Elaine, her parents and grandmother moved into a very nice house in Garstaedt, a suburb of Hamburg. They had a yard with fruit trees, shrubs, vegetables, chickens, geese, ducks, doves, a pig named 'Otto' and a beautiful dog named 'Senta'. Senta was a female German shepherd, so tame she permitted small ducklings in her doghouse. Rita enjoyed all of the animals, especially Senta's litter of 11 puppies, which she hated to sell at the market.

Rita adored her grandmother who lived with them, for nearly two years, while Flory helped Erwin with his new successful wholesale grocery business. The business required more space, and it was moved into a large multi-storied bunker (bomb shelter). Flory was cooped up daily in the old converted bomb shelter, which served as a ware-house. She worked like a horse, but loved the results. She moved large 100 pound sacks of flour, sugar or grain by using her knees and wiggled them forwards, whenever her laborers were not available to help her. Many workers stole small amounts of groceries and the accountant tried to cheat them out of money as well. Flory was so good hearted that she listened to their excuses and often forgave them. She thought, "They were all Nazis before, but they are people, who need to eat." To prevent thefts, she never left the business to eat lunch. She somehow managed with only a quick breakfast at home and a very satisfying dinner at night. Erwin traveled daily to small grocery stores to get orders, and took time for a leisurely lunch.

Rita recalls a funny story that happened when she was 12 years old. Her mother had just finished starting a fire in each room's pot belly stove to heat the house. Flory was always was in a hurry for breakfast. Rita or Elaine were to get fresh hard rolls from a nearby bakery every morning. They traded a small sack of flour and some money for the freshly baked hard rolls.

Flory looked forward to the aroma and delicious taste of her quick breakfast each morning. Since Rita and Elaine were now almost 12 and 13 years old, they were more interested in looking pretty, than in getting the rolls for their mother. Flory said nothing, but was steaming angry for the delay. She showed her anger by dumping the sack of flour over both girls' heads. It cured Rita and Elaine of future 'dilly-dallying'. The girls ran to the baker just as fast as possible, their mother deserved a good breakfast with all the hard labor she did all day. Rita recalls, "The shock of the white flour all over me, I will never forget. I was so embarrassed to go to the baker then, but he hardly noticed." "What seemed a disaster then, is funny many years later.", Rita said.

The business did so well, that Flory spared nothing to make her girls and family happy. Rita had one more fabulous Christmas after another. Both girls received matching toys and clothes. Although they felt too old for baby dolls, Flory gave them each a huge baby doll, complete with doll cribs decorated with draped sides and top. They received beautiful new shiny red leather boots and shiny new maroon colored bikes to ride to the country school they attended.

Everything was beautiful, until one day when Rita's life stood still. Omie had gone for a week to visit with Aunt Edith. Flory sadly revealed that, "Omie died of a heart attack". Rita was saddened, school was hardly tolerable. An 18 year old girl was hired to help look after the house, girls and animals. Flory sent the girls and Helge (the new maid) on vacation, to cheer them up. But even a vacation at a beautiful beach, with Senta, the dog, was a not substitute for her parents or her beloved Omie. Rita was homesick in a few days, and told her parents so, when they came to visit for a weekend. But Rita had to stay for two weeks anyway. She was

pretty miserable, in spite of the beauty around her. The foaming ocean waves were spectacular to watch, the sunny weather warmed her feet and body, and gorgeous blue Delphiniums at the hotel were nearly as tall as Rita. They were so beautiful, but she missed her dear Omie so very much, she could hardly wait to return to her home. Yet she knew Omie would not be there to meet her. Her heart was heavy with the pain of her loss.

In 1947, the United States of America Consul permitted some 'displaced persons' to immigrate to the America. The family applied right away, but were not permitted to leave until October 1951. In the meantime, they had to sell their business and their house, slaughter all their chickens, ducks and geese and pack their furniture into a large crate to ship to America. Rita was sick every time she had to take a live chicken, duck or goose to a farmer, who slaughtered the animal for a fee. Rita had to carry the dead animal home, so that her mother could roast it for dinner. Often Rita could not eat the roasted duck or chicken, because she became attached to the animal. They were pets to her. Her most important pet was her large, kind, multicolored German Shephard dog, Senta. Luckily a very kind lady in Hamburg took her, and promised to walk her daily through a 'Park on the Alster' (a reservoir). Again leaving the beautiful home and seeing all the animals disappear was a difficult time for Rita and the family. Rita always wanted to go to the America, but all of a sudden her life seemed so torn up and she felt so forlorn.

To emigrate to the America, Rita and family had to be penniless and live in the 'Displaced Persons Camp'. They lived in the 'Displaced Persons Camp' in Wentorf, Germany. The camp consisted of a group of multi-storied brick barracks (buildings), similar to an Army base. The large barrack's rooms were subdivided into smaller rooms for each family with clothes lines,

blankets, and lockers. Rita and her family learned a little English, and were required to take turns working in the mess (dining) hall kitchen to prepare food for the many displaced persons living in the camp.

Rita and family lived from day to day, played table games and waited for an answer regarding immigration. Whenever it was their turn to emigrate to America, they were refused for another reason. Usually it was due to a small medical problem with one of the family members. Each time the U.S. officials refused to permit the family to immigrate to America, the family had to leave the displaced persons' camp. Therefore they moved in and out of the displaced persons' camp several times before emigrating to America.

Outside the displaced persons' camp, there were no apartments or jobs available for Erwin. Rita and her family ended up in a dingy two room, upstairs apartment in Altona, one of the worst sections in Germany. It was an ugly and dirty looking harbor city with sailors, prostitution, poverty and narrow cobblestone alleys for streets. Nearby church bells chimed every quarter on the hour. The endless chimes, dreariness of the apartment, bad environment and poverty state saddened Flory and her family. They became totally demoralized. Flory and Elaine became deeply depressed and stayed in bed for weeks. Rita at 12, knew she had to pitch in and help out her family, but she could not yet work.

An open farmers' market was held weekly on Sundays. Erwin went there and tried to sell the cigarettes he received from 'care' packages. Rita tried to bring home some old left over bananas, she received for free, after the market closed. Once she searched the fish industry alleys for a

'handout'. She was lucky to receive a whole fish. She was overwhelmed with pride to show it to her depressed mother. Flory was delighted and got up to cook the fish. All had a happy meal, while Flory and Elaine decided to try harder to look at life for something 'good', rather than 'bad'. Although they had to wait six months before they could try again to qualify for emigration, they decided not to give up hope. But then in October 1951, they finally left, by ship, for the U.S.A.

At first the military ship was the greatest place, with fresh oranges. All the food was deliciously cooked and served. Then Flory and Elaine got sea sick for the rest of the trip, and could not enjoy any of the food. The 10 day trip was rough, due to the October weather. One day, Rita recalls, that everyone was called to the deck of the ship, regardless of their illnesses. It was cold and windy with 40 foot waves splashing over the deck. Everyone stayed on deck for 15 minutes, wearing an orange emergency life jacket, fearing what was next? The captain finally decided that the children and adults went through too much hardship already to make them practice with the emergency boats. He instead issued a warning, "No one except the crew is allowed on deck during the next couple of days, due to the storm." All the doors were bolted. Rita and the rest of the people respected the orders. The waves washed high over the ship. Whales, dolphins and schools of sharks were easily noticed through the round windows in the ship. Time was spent by Rita and Elaine in the dark and dreary steps to the door leading to the deck, where they and other children exchanged stories of their horrible war experiences.

When the block long gray war ship, called General McGray, finally arrived in the New York City harbor on October 13th, in the evening, everyone came to the deck of the ship and rejoiced

at the sight. Some gave sighs of relief, while others said 'thank you' prayers. Although they had to wait to unload until the morning, the New York Skyline was a wonder to behold. Rita exclaimed, "How beautiful and romantic the skyline looks." The streets glittered with traffic and street lights, the skyscrapers glowed with abundant lights, and the sky was filled with twinkling stars. "What a night to remember.", Rita marveled at the sight. The Statue of Liberty was another breathtaking experience, all lit up and glowing in the dark. Rita was truly grateful for her arrival at this great magical, and bustling city of New York. She never imagined she would see the country of 'milk and honey' being so sparkling and welcoming.

When finally morning came, they were permitted to land. They were given a few dollars to buy food, asked individually "you sick?" But no one wanted to be sick. All were eager to go and enjoy themselves in the biggest, most populated and interesting city of the world. The family was aching to see New York City. A vending machine lunchroom was where they stopped to eat. They were amazed with the vending machines, the quantity of food and the low prices. They were so grateful, even after they realized, the cashier tried to cheat them out of their change, because they looked like 'greenhorns' (inexperienced people).

The next day, they went to Pittsburgh by train, where Erwin had a job as welder. "Funny, how life makes a complete circle.", Rita thought in retrospect. Erwin's 'Forced Labor' experience during the war, became his most sought after education in the new country, since his business knowledge was not acceptable, due to his poor English. Therefore since Pittsburgh was a steel mill city, the family was sponsored to settle there.

The girls, now 13 and 14 years old, who were in and out of school throughout Germany, now went directly into the seventh grade and learned to adjust quickly. Their teachers enjoyed them for their politeness, eagerness to learn, and appreciation for everything they received. The students sometimes poked fun at how the girls dressed or talked with accents. But most of the time, their classmates were intrigued and responded kindly toward Rita and Elaine. Often they brought used clothes to the school for the girls. When the Thanksgiving holiday came, the girls were invited to eat and pray with another family. Rita and Elaine felt very uncomfortable due to the 'religious' atmosphere. But they were grateful for the splendid array of foods and turkey drumsticks they were given, but could not finish. "Too much food", Rita recalls, "But the kindness and generosity was overwhelming to me."

Then again the same family's brother and sister came by with a sled at Christmas time. They pulled the sled for two or three miles through the city of Pittsburgh. They brought a Christmas tree, lights, decorations, and a gift for each of the girls. It was so beautiful and heart-warming, that Rita had to cry and think, "They tried so hard to welcome us to this 'country of plenty'. When everyday good tidings and cheer was 'plenty' for us."

Several years later, Rita married Jim in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. Later, she, and her husband and two children settled in Syracuse, New York. Rita earned a degree from Syracuse University and worked as an interior designer and a medical illustrator. She also was a painter in both oil and water colors. She never let the hardships she encountered early in her life discourage her.

In Syracuse, Rita met other Holocaust survivors. Some of the other stories in this book are based on these peoples' lives. Rita hopes that the youths in the United States can identify with all their hardships during the war and their joy of peace in the U.S.A. She hopes that it may help the youths of today to appreciate the good life and opportunities this country has to offer them.

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CHAPTER 3 - WHAT HAPPENED TO JOE, THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN BOY?

Joseph was living in Czechoslovakia all his life. He was 18 years old now and his parents were in a hurry to say 'goodbye', at the harbor. Joe's mother said "We must board quickly, before the Nazis change their mind about our leaving." She and her husband had tears in their eyes, and felt torn between their decision to flee the country and to leave some of their grown children behind.

Joe's parents hardly recognized the country they called their own all their lives. There was the smell of fear, war, hatred, and economic disaster. Slovakian and Nazi intimidation and infiltration was everywhere. No one could speak truthfully, due to fear of being overheard and imprisoned. The terrible omen of war drove the parents to the difficult decision of leaving their beloved country, home and even their grown children. They could not take anything with them, except their clothes. Their hearts ached as they felt torn apart, while climbing aboard the ship to escape the Nazis and the signs of war.

Joe had just turned 18 years old. He was lean, tall, red haired, and handsome. He felt very much alone, as he watched his parents climb aboard the ship of freedom to the U.S.A. He wished, "He too could leave all the nasty signs of war behind." Joe was the youngest of the three children left behind. Joe and his 38 year old brother, Herman, tried to flee with their parents, but were forced to stay by the government of their country. Also they were not given visas to emigrate to the U.S.A., due to restricted Jewish quotas (only a limited number of Jews were permitted to emigrate).

Joe and his family were Jewish and they owned a lumber yard. But they feared the Nazis' in the government and their antiSemitism (discrimination against Jews). The Czechoslovakian government was infiltrated by Nazis and Slovakians, who were Nazi

sympathizers. The government was unreasonable. They issued new unjust rules and regulations daily. That was the reason why Joe's family gave up their wealth, home and even two of their sons and their married daughter, to make a new haven of safety for themselves and the rest of their family. Two of their children fled for the U.S.A. previously to work, due to the poor economic conditions in Czechoslovakia. The parents hoped the Czechoslovakian government would eventually permit their youngest and oldest sons to emigrate, but they were forced to stay for service in the army.

For many years, Joe and Herman worked in their parents' lumberyard, all by themselves. At first half, then all their income was taken by force by the Nazis. The brothers considered themselves lucky to be recognized as 'Economy Important Jews', who were spared from going to the concentration camp for a while. Their beautiful married sister, Hannah, brother-in-law and their darling two children were not so lucky.

In the early part of the war, Joe noticed his dear sister and one of her two small boys looking out of a cattle box car, at the train station. The Nazis were getting ready to transport them to a concentration camp. When Joe's sister and the little nephew saw Joe. The little boy yelled, "water, water". Joe asked the SS Nazi official nearby, "Would you get the little boy some water, please." Joe was told in no uncertain terms "nein", as the SS officer drew his pistol to show he meant it. Sadly Joe recalls, "That was the last time I saw or heard from my sister and her family." "They are assumed dead", he said, "When they did not return within two years after the war was over."

During the war, when Joe and Herman decided that they were in danger themselves, the two brothers 'split up' for security reasons. Herman was married and had two small children, as his sister did. It was difficult for him and his family to flee. He feared getting

caught by the Nazis. Luckily Herman found a nearby farmer, who permitted the family to hide at his farm. Herman and his family were hidden in a very shallow wooden pen, directly below a real pig pen. Herman's family of four had only enough room to lie on their backs and could not make any noise all day. They had to endure the cold, stench and fear daily, as the Nazis could have come at any minute to the farm to take whoever they wished. Therefore Herman's family had to stay hidden and totally quiet.

Both Herman and his friend, the farmer, knew what would happen to all of them, including the farmer, if the Jewish family was found there. They saw their friends going to concentration camps. Innocent, old people were battered in the streets and taken away at gun point by the Nazis. There was no justice, no bargaining, no compassion. Only fear, hardship and pain was realized daily. The cowardly Nazis, who had many weapons, enforced the unjust laws they created to keep the people in line.

Joe worked for a little while longer at the lumberyard, but one day he received a telephone call. Joe did not recognize the voice, but the message was clear. "You are in danger, run and hide.", said the man's voice through the receiver. Joe was devastated, but he felt lucky to be tipped off. He ran to hide at his best friend's family house, a shack, for the night. The next morning, Joe left on a friendly, yet fearful note. He said, "Dear friend, I appreciate your kindness, but I cannot put you and your family into such jeopardy by staying with you." It was rare for a Gentile (not a Jew) to offer help to a Jew, no matter how long they may have known each other.

During the war, Joe had to wear a large yellow Jewish star of David on his outer clothes to show that he was Jewish. His former schoolmates, who were Gentiles, ignored him in the streets or at best said "Heil Hitler" (Hail Hitler) when they met. It was obvious they did not

want to be seen talking to Joe, a Jew. Joe felt very lucky to have at least two friends left, the one who warned him about getting picked up by the Nazis, and the one who offered his humble home to hide Joe.

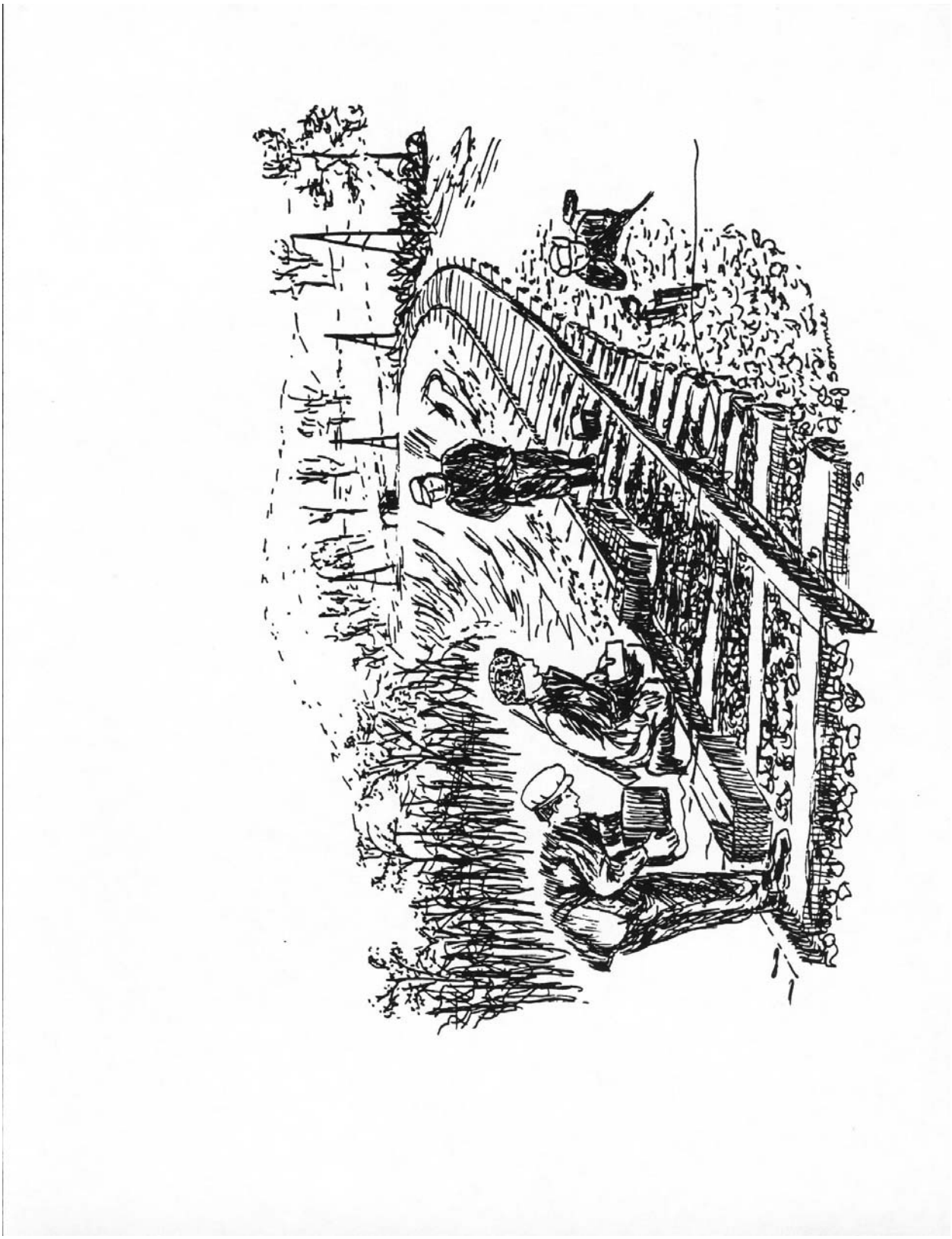
Joe left to go south to avoid the Nazis in the northern military zone, who were battling with the pursuing Russian Army. It was nearly at the end of the war, Joe hid himself among many escapees in the cold, dank and dark woods. There he met the Underground. The Underground consisted of a small army of heroic men and women who worked against the government and the invading German Army. They knew their activities put them at a very high risk of getting caught by the Nazis and killed.

They sabotaged anything to stop the war from running smoothly. They caused confusion, added sugar to gas tanks of military cars and trucks to choke their engines. They exploded bridges, highways and rails to cut military thoroughfares for supplies and ammuni- tion. They ambushed soldiers and killed them for their food, ammunition and clothing. They participated in handing out propaganda leaflets to clarify their opposition and news of the war. They spread the truth and recruited additional sympathizers to help end the war.

It was very risky business, but Joe felt for certain that he was not going to be spared by the Nazis for long. He was approached by the Underground because he was tall, and although thin, was needed to carry cement bags to hide the explosives under a railroad bridge. Joe was also very hungry and cold, his new deeds enabled him to eat at least one or two potatoes each day. The Nazi Army was well fed and clothed at the time, and ignored all the others' poor standard of living. They killed the villagers, if they said or did anything to defend their home or country.

The Underground group was very secretive to avoid danger to themselves or others. Each Underground member only knew enough to do his job, only the leader knew the entire plan. They usually worked in the dark of the night. They took risks, but for very good reasons. It was to feed themselves and others, stop the war and regain their country. "It was worth the risk.", Joe thought. So they hid themselves in the damp, dark, cold forest to ambush the Nazi soldiers or sabotage their missions, usually by night. "They had to kill or be killed.", Joe believed. The Underground had very little ammunition, at most they had some hand grenades and a small number of rifles, and knives. They made some explosives. But often they were so crudely made, they were noticed or exploded too early. The Germans had very large tanks, automatic ground artillery, and heavily armed ground troops. By air they had bombers and by sea they had U-boats (submarines). In addition, the Czechoslovakian government was infiltrated with Nazis and Nazi sympathizers. There were no just laws or help from the government.

After three months of hiding and working with the Underground, Joe and five of his Underground buddies were caught by the Nazis. Usually they were able to avoid capture. The Germans issued warrants for the arrest of any Underground members. Someone must have 'tipped off' the Nazis. "All is fair at love and war.", someone said, "But the worst is yet to come." Sometimes whole villages were burned and completely destroyed by the angry Germans. This occurred when the villagers did not reveal who killed the Nazi soldiers or sabotaged the Germans' missions. Therefore not only the Underground, but also those who knew of the Underground's identities had to be brave. Often the villagers would not tell even under torturous interrogations, for which the Nazis were so infamous.



Joe and his Underground buddies were caught by the Germans. They were ordered to walk, with their arms above their heads, and then loaded into a truck. When they arrived at the Nazi Headquarters, Joe thought, "This time, my number is up." At the Nazi Headquarters they were individually beaten, kicked and interrogated for many days and nights. They were questioned over and over again, without sleep, without food, to try to make them reveal information about the Underground. Every time Joe's turn came, he tried to be as casual as possible not to offend the officials. But they beat him, and kicked him until he finally passed out. When he was revived with cold water, he was lying on the floor in a pool of blood. He remembered the kick to his head by a Nazi boot, knocking out some of his teeth. Joe's head swam with dizziness, discomfort, spitting up blood and teeth. Joe felt awful, sick to his stomach, weak and defenseless, but he felt lucky to still be alive.

Joe thought of how much he hated the Nazis' cruelty and inhumane treatment. The officials seemed to enjoy the interrogations with all the cruelties. Joe remembered his parents and their teachings to honor and respect life. Everything was upside down in his present world. People were dying of hunger and cold. There seemed to be no end to the pain, sorrow and injustice. The government was not looking out for the people, as before, but rather for the invading Nazis and their needs. The civilians were angry at the injustice, the fear, and the hardship. Some felt they had nothing to loose by fighting, they could only regain their dignity. Now that Joe was caught, he honestly revealed only the simplest of duties he performed, and that he was no leader, nor had any special information.

Joe was then taken to a train of cattle cars, and he was deported to Germany. Joe, along with many hundreds of concentration camp victims on the train, rode two days standing up without toilet facilities, proper food or water. The people were packed tightly, like 'sardines in a can', with the only air fit to breathe at the top of the car. The floor had a

stench from the unsanitary conditions. No one wanted to fall, yet some passed out, while others trampled them accidentally in the crowded cattle car.

Joe noticed through a small opening of the wooden cattle car, the name Augsburg station. They were driven back and forth between two train stations several times, until the train finally stopped to unload. Joe was exhausted from two days of restricted standing, thirst, and freezing in the cold temperatures. His headache and painful bruises from the Nazis' abusive interrogation were still with him, along many other discomforts. He had not eaten for many days, but his stomach was too upset to notice. His anxiety and fear to know 'what the future may bring' had his stomach tied in a knot. Joe and the other prisoners were weak and felt awful as the Nazi officials unloaded the trains. Loud blaring music greeted the prisoners. It was to cover up the noise from shrill officials' voices, whistles, blaring loudspeaker announcements, barking police dogs, crying prisoners, beatings, and gun shots. For some of the ill prisoners it was overwhelming and fearful. For others, who wanted the long ride to come to an end and looked forward to a positive end, the music was soothing and promising. All prisoners were glad the long ride was finally over.

The Augsburg Work Concentration Camp, consisted of a barbed wired fenced in corral with cold barracks and straw bunk beds. The beds were not much, they had lice and smelled of human waste. But Joe felt it was a whole lot better than the cold ground in the woods or the discomforts of the cattle car. He did not mind working hard either, as long as he had at least one meal a day of some sort.

There was much confusion at the camp among the Nazi officers. The Nazis feared an invasion by the Russians was imminent. In some camps the Nazis worked harder at disposing of the Jews. Joe was lucky he was only at a 'work camp' not a 'death camp'. He

spent six grueling months there, then he was liberated by the Russian Allied Army, with the greatest relief and appreciation.

Many nights, when Joe ached with pain, cold and hunger, he missed his parents and family very much. But he was glad they left for a safer haven in the U.S.A. He hoped that someday, if God was willing, he and his brother would join them. That thought enabled him to 'live one day at a time'. As luck would have it, he did go to the U.S. by way of Canadian immigration after the war. He married and started another wholesale lumber business with his brothers near the Canadian border in the Adirondack region of New York. Now retired, he resides in New York and is living out his life peacefully. In spite of his past hardships, he is not bitter. He has a wonderful attitude. He is polite, tall and handsome even at nearly 70 years old. He helps other Holocaust survivors and is a speaker at support groups and public events. "We must never forget the Holocaust", he said, "But must learn, from history, about the injustice brought on by a few, who manipulated power to control many through propaganda, intimidation and atrocities."

Many of Joe's relatives were killed and burned to ashes in the concentration camps. It is estimated that Joe's relatives died along with six million other innocent and brave Jews. Now the few survivors left must tell their stories for future generations to prevent it from ever happening again. 'Never again'.

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CHAPTER 4 - HOW ITALIAN ANTHONY BECAME A MAN

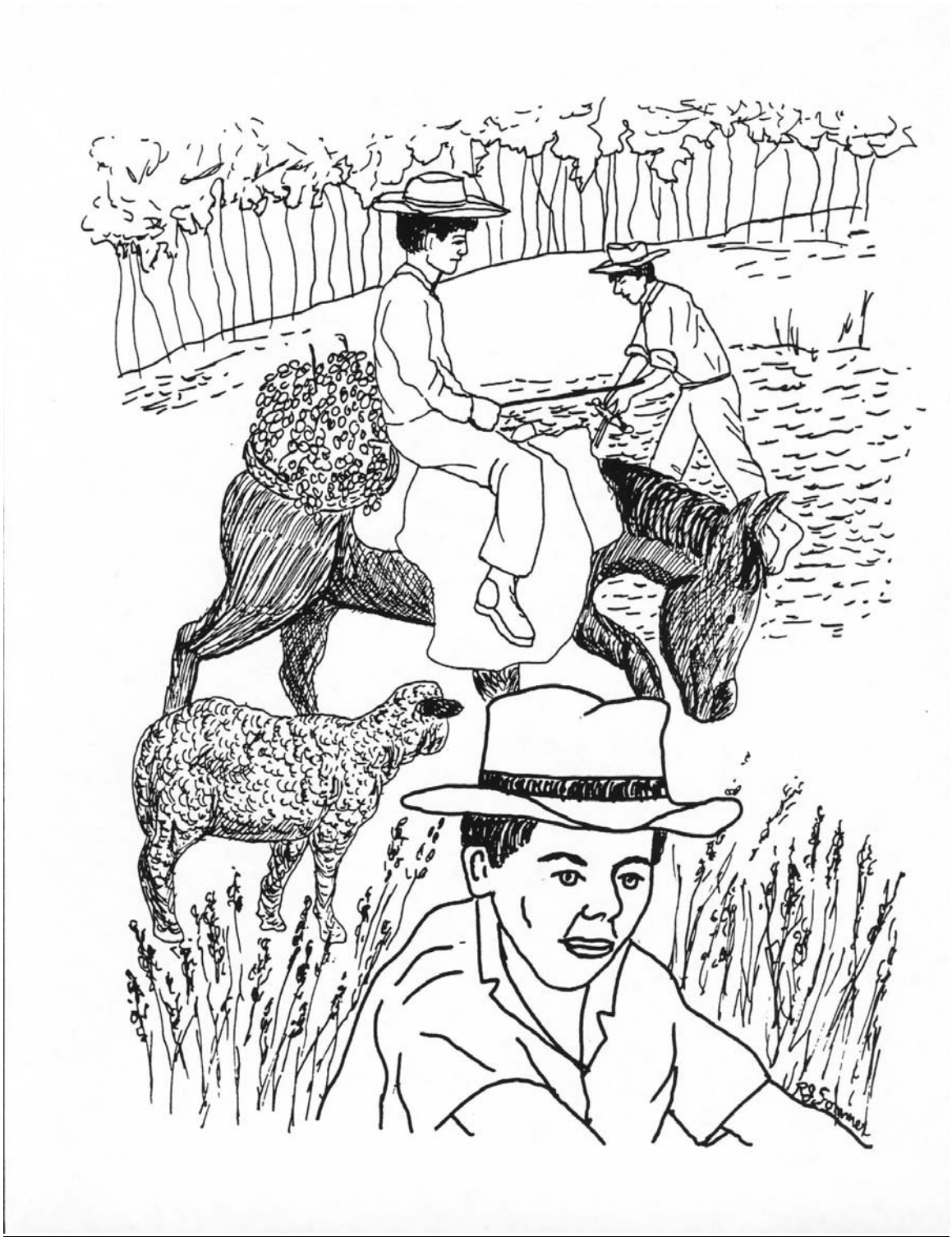
In 1939, when Anthony was only nine years old, he already felt the effect of the war. Times were difficult then in his small Italian village, no one had a job. Luckily, his father had been working in the U.S.A. since 1911, long before Anthony was born. His father's dream was to earn enough money in the U.S.A. to buy a piece of land and a house in Italy for his family. So once his father saved enough money, he returned to Italy to his favorite little village, Casalbino and bought a house. Casabino, which then had a population of only 8,000, is located between Pascara and Bosto, cities on the east coast of Italy. The homes in Casalbino were without televisions, radios or other electric appliances. Often the homes were even without indoor toilets, baths or warm water. But life in Casalbino was delightfully cheerful with warm neighborly love, companionship, and song and dance festivals.

In 1935, there was very little work in the village and Anthony's father had to support his wife and three children, two girls and of course, a boy named Anthony. So Anthony's father again went to the U.S.A., this time to earn money support his wife and family. Anthony was only four years old when he saw his father leave for America.

A short time later, Anthony's father sent for his two daughters, but unfortunately the harbor was closed. At that time, he couldn't go back to Italy to visit his family, without being drafted into the Italian army. So the only thing that his father was able to do to help his family was to send money to them on a regular basis.

Conditions were very different when Anthony's father was in America the first time. Then he was able to return to Italy to visit his family, usually once a year. He had often tried to persuade his wife and family to go with him to America. But it was difficult for the family to leave the little village, where they knew everyone, and learning a new language would be hard. The children were in school and did not want to leave their friends. So Anthony and his mother and sisters remained in Italy, separated from Anthony's father. Although they missed their father very much, they enjoyed the new home, their father built before leaving Italy, and their garden which had fresh vegetables, fruit, and flowers.

Before the war, the small, cobble stoned, town square was where people met, exchanged goods, and held festivals with lots of songs, dance, food and laughter. After the war started, everything became much quieter. People talked, but not happily, nor openly, or as truthfully as before. They realized that the government, headed by the dictator Mussolini, was watching them. If there was noise in the town square, it was either a political rally or a group of frightened 18 year old boys. At that time all young men, 18 and older, were drafted into the Italian Armed Service. They stood at attention as their names were called at the town square, to be sent to Spain or North Africa to fight. Still others decided not to fight and hid in the mountains. Anthony's 20 year old cousin died in a concentration camp, immediately after he was drafted. Later it was said, "He died because he criticized the Nazis." The Nazis were Fascist, while Mussolini was a Socialist, who turned to Fascism to work with Hitler.



Anthony and his family felt lucky to have enough food. Many people in their village had no garden of their own. Often Anthony would go to the village square to take fresh vegetables and fruit to their friends. He would stop to listen to the only radio in town, blasting away propaganda, news and songs on a loud speaker. Anthony was too young to understand the hateful things that were said, but he knew it was his government's leader Benito Mussolini, and often Adolf Hitler from Germany, screaming in shrill voices of authority. The two leaders were forming a friendship of a kind, to take over the world by force, spreading hatred, and fear to the common people. They united their efforts with Japan and called their group of three nations the 'Axis', (German for axle of a wheel). The British, Americans, Russians, along with the other nations who were fighting the 'Axis', called themselves the 'Allied' forces.

When Anthony returned home after visiting the town square, his ears were still ringing with the loud, boasting voices and marching music he heard. He would ask his mother about it. But she would only say, "Anthony, don't worry your little heart about things neither you nor I can control." Anthony did not understand her either.

Anthony went to a boys club called 'Belilla'. There he met friends in black shirts, who he could talk to. They did not understand what was going on either, but they all agreed to 'let it go'. The boys club was fun to visit after school every day. In Anthony's village there were no Jews, only Catholics. So everyone that attended public school was not only permitted, but required to join the boys club. Anthony never realized 'prejudism' or 'antiSemitism' existed. The boys learned very much the same information as the 'Hitler Youth' in Germany did. They learned how to salute, march, recite political slogans and propaganda. They were disciplined to be loyal citizens to Mussolini's Italian government.

Anthony secretly wished he was with his father in the U.S.A., even though his mother was very good to him. When he returned home from school or the boys club, he always found his mother either working in the yard, hanging out clothes or talking to her friends, while she mended her family's clothes. It was difficult to buy new clothes. So everything had to last or was handed down to someone who could make good use of the clothes. Anthony's mother whispered her fears to her friends, but not her family. She protected Anthony and his two older sisters, Paula and Anna, from information that could get them in trouble if they repeated it to their friends and the government found out about it. During the war, people were arrested and questioned by the Plain Clothed Police if they said anything against the government.

One time, when Anthony was visiting the town square, he saw the Nazi army marching. Their 'goose step' (strutting style) marching was noisy, military, precise and intimidating. Yet to Anthony, they seemed friendly with the people who offered them fresh fruit and vegetables. After all the Nazis were friendly with the Italian government until much later.

Anthony, although he was the youngest in his family, felt that he was responsible to take care of his mother and two older sisters, in his father's absence. He took very good care of a sheep, tilled the soil for planting, and made deliveries for his mother. During the years 1943 to 1947, Anthony felt especially responsible to take care of his family. At the time the public schools were closed due to the war. He was only 11 to 14 years old then, but was a mighty big helper. Anthony was a big help to his mother, and she complimented him often for being such a big help. His father always had a nice comment in his letters for him. His father usually referred to Anthony in his letters as "the little, big man", the

"strong farm boy" or the "chores-well-done fella". Anthony was proud of his family and himself. He deserved to be proud.

The Italian Army was stationed in North Africa to defend all land captured by the Germans or them. The British attacked the Italians to liberate the North African people and their land. The war lasted for several years. But when the British finally won back the land, the Italian soldiers changed their ideals. They declared war on Germany on October 13, 1943 and fought along side of the British and other Allied nations for the rest of the war.

The Germans invaded the North African Nations again, with more bloodshed resulting. It was a bitter war in the hot desert land, where people, animals and machinery were overheated and fatigued quickly. Finally when the United States and other nations fought along side of the British, the Germans lost North Africa to the Allies, and fled through the major cities of Italy in retreat and confusion.

Some Italian men decided not to fight at all, and due to fear of the Germans, they hid in the mountains. Others attacked the retreating German army. When a German soldier was killed, the Germans would sometimes attack civilians for revenge. They would line up the Italian men in a nearby town and shoot them in cold blood. Therefore all men, young or old would disappear and live in the mountains. Only old women and small children remained in the villages. The Germans would ask, "What happened to all your men?" The old women would smile and remain silent.

When Anthony was 12, he picked up a 'live' shell in the town square. The shell was ready to explode. Fortunately he threw it at the last moment, preventing his arm or body from exploding. He had no fear, because he was unaware of the dangers. He witnessed another

explosion that made him sick to his stomach for weeks. He saw the Germans fire explosives into a second story apartment, where a mother and her two children refused to leave. The explosion completely destroyed the apartment and killed the mother and her children. It also killed a British soldier standing near the building. It was a horrible sight for Anthony to witness.

When the town was bombed by the Allied air force, the Nazis shot back with ground fire. The civilians had no bomb shelters. Anthony once got so nervous during an air raid that he ran out of his house and hid under a little bush. That bush obviously would never have protected him from the bombs.

When the Nazis fled to the north to escape from the Allies, they placed land mines all over Italy to explode the pursuing Allied troops. The German troops placed many land mines in Anthony's yard and village. Anthony and his family left in a hurry to go south to stay with their cousins, who lived in Boston 14 miles away. The family walked towards the south, in the middle of the road, while on both sides of the road the British soldiers were walking to the north. Sometimes bombs were dropped or machine guns were fired at the highway from enemy aircraft. Anthony and his family were lucky to survive the attacks.

Sometimes Anthony was very frightened by all the soldiers around him, but most of the time he was relieved to see the British. The British were now their friends. Sometimes, he and his buddies 'sneaked a smoke' from the cigarette butts the soldiers threw away. But more often, he enjoyed the chewing gum and cookies they gave him. He disliked the tea the British offered him then, and he still does today.

When the family finally got to Boston, after two days of walking, they stayed in a very crowded one room house with their cousins. Since there were six people in their cousin's family, there was a total of ten people living in the house. They had to take turns sleeping on the floor and beds. There was not enough room at the table for them to all eat at the same time, so they eat in shifts. Sometimes they relaxed outdoors in the sun. At least they felt safer there. After a few months, they returned to their home in Casalbino. All was in shambles, but when the dangerous land mines were removed from their garden, slowly things went back to normal.

The Allied forces finally chased the Germans back to their own homeland from Africa. Then, on June 6, 1944, the Americans and other Allies forces transported a large number of their troops, by sea, from England to Normandy, France and attacked the German army in Western Europe. At the same time, the Russian forces attacked the German army on the Eastern front (in Russia) and pushed the German troops all the way back to Germany. After fierce fighting in Germany, the German army was totally defeated. They surrendered in May l945. The terrible war was finally over in Europe.

When, the Allied Forces liberated the Jews in the concentration camps, they were appalled by what they saw. They found out that almost all of the Jews had already been murdered by the Germans. The few prisoners that were not killed were barely alive physically and mentally. The Allied soldiers could not believe the inhumane horrors the Nazis inflicted on their fellow men.

Anthony came to New York in l952 and teaches Spanish to high school students. He has learned to love all his students regardless of their color, creed or religion. Every summer

he returns to his parents' old farm house, to do minor repairs and to remember his early life, his people and his old country.

Anthony believes in helping young people. He feels that their self-esteem can only be build by teaching them to care for and respect others. To accomplish this, Anthony recommends education in arts and science, recreation with fishing, plant life, animals, and sports. Anthony feels, "All children deserve love and discipline at home to strengthen their self-esteem. They should join only the clubs, that work only TOWARDS POSITIVE MORAL GOALS for the youths and mankind."

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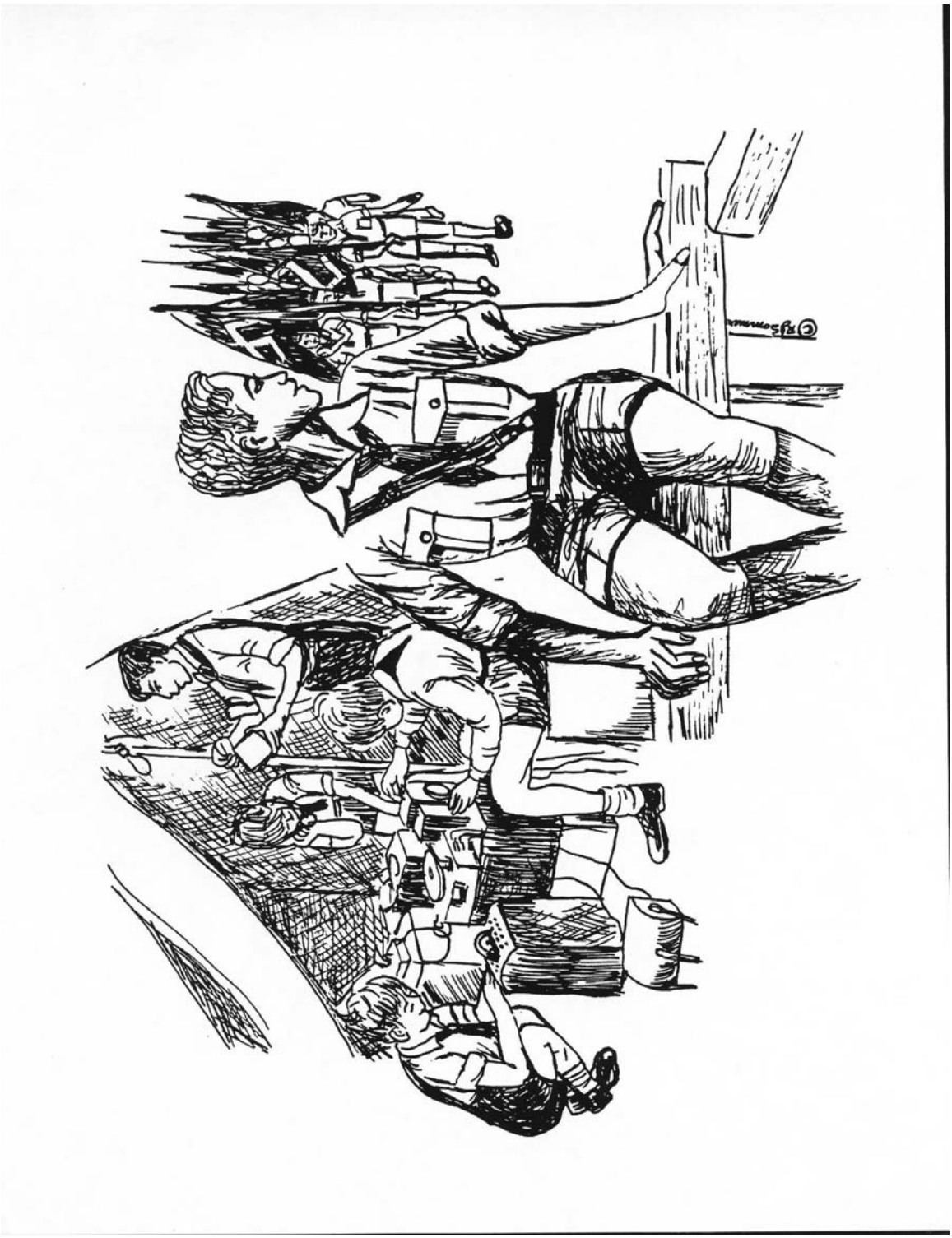
Chapter 5 - GERMAN GERDIE JOINS BOYS' CLUB

Gerhard, nicknamed Gerdie, was looking forward to joining the gang at the Boys' Club, after all he was already 10 years old. He felt very much alone, being an only child, and living in an apartment in the middle of Hamburg, Germany. His parents, Edith and Hans Kaehler, were arguing constantly. His father, Hans, could not find work in the depressed economy of Germany. This left Hans in despair and resulted in his alcoholism. While Edith and Hans were arguing, after Hans had become drunk, Gerdie often sneaked out of the apartment to get away from his father and mother. Besides, Gerdie remembered what Hitler said, "It is good to distance yourself from your parents."

Gerdie walked to his school, where the boys met everyday after school hours. At first it was an ordinary boys club, but then it became the 'Hitler Youth' and everything changed. There were even 17 year old boys there. Gerdie thought, "It must really be worthwhile if they joined." What Gerdie did not know was that all Aryan (pure German) youths were required to join. The club was set up by Hitler and his Nazi Party to 'brainwash' the German youths with propaganda (lies) and gain the youths' loyalty to Hitler.

When Hitler came into power, in 1933, he selected a man named Baldur von Schirach as head of the Hitler Youth. Schirach was spellbound by Hitler's speeches and had memorized them by age 18. He wrote poetry for Hitler, praising him as a genius who came from the stars. When Schirach was around 20 years old, he was still boyish looking enough to lead the youths. Hitler felt, "Youth Leading Youth was important." They could then identify or look up to him as their 'big brother'.



Schirach used 'force' and fifty very strong teenage boys to intimidate and control all boys' clubs. Force was an old Nazi tactic. The fifty youths marched in a strutting fashion called 'goose-stepping', when visiting various youth organizations. They stole the membership files of rival organizations and forced the youths in them to join the Hitler Youth organization. Only Aryans (pure Germans) could join. This excluded Jews, Gypsies and handicapped youths.

There were already about 100,000 Hitler Youths. Hitler wanted all the youths to be under his command, readily available for future army enlistments. He was planning a war and needed young, loyal soldiers by l939. These young boys and girls would give him no objections or discipline problems, once they were adults. They were brainwashed and indoctrinated by the Hitler Youths organization.

Gerdie felt strong and important, when he went to the Hitler Youth group each day. He did not have to tell his mother anything about it. Hitler Youth covered for him, the club was his outlet to defy his parents. He never told his parents 'where or when' he was going. He felt free and easy, until he reached his meeting. Then he had to jump to attention and click his heels. His uniform had to be clean and ironed. His hair had to be of proper length and neatly combed, his face and hands had to be washed. Then they all listened to one of the oldest in the group, who taught them to respect the Fuhrer (leader) Hitler. They learned to recite propaganda songs, slogans, how to salute, take orders, and march in groups. They also learned where and when they were to march in the streets. They were always very strictly told, what to do and how to do it. But it was all fun for Gerdie. He had no other children to play with at home or on the street. They were all at the meeting and saluted each other with "Heil Hitler" (Hail Hitler).

Gerdie was most excited, when he learned how to march with his group. Some had drums to beat to reinforce the strict rhythm of their high 'goose step' marching. Others carried enormous large red swastika flags. Their uniforms consisted of khaki brown shirts, shorts, ties, shoulder strap-belts, and knee socks. To impress the general public, a great deal of emphasis was placed on how well the uniforms of the soldiers and the Hitler Youths looked. Hitler meant to inspire pride and intimidation with the militarily organized marching youth's groups.

At times, the Hitler Youths had special assignments for the Youth groups, intended to intimidate the Jews. The SS officers (cruel soldiers) backed up the Youths, so the unarmed Jews could not resist. Once the Youths ordered adult Jews to clean the streets with tooth brushes. The general public stood by smirking and calling them names. When Gerdie and his 'gang' marched, adults gathered with pride, sometimes fear. This made Gerdie and the boys feel important.

Gerdie learned to not listen to his parents, if they disagreed with the Hitler Youths' philosophy. He instead was to turn 'their words' in to his immediate Hitler Youth Leader. The Leader would then pass the information on to his supervisor. The Secret Police would follow up on the information and often arrested the parents. So if Gerdie's parents threatened him, he warned them, "I'm with the Hitler Youths, beware."

Gerdie felt very close to his Aunt Flory, who lived with them for a number of years and took care of Gerdie when he was a young boy. He visited her often, even after she married and moved away to start her own family. She could hardly recognize the change in Gerdie when he became a teenager and was part of the Hitler Youth. She always thought of Gerdie as special. His curly blond hair and fair face resembled her family. She realized, he was going through teenage rebellion, and his home life was less than desirable. But she

knew that the changes in him were more than just teen age rebellion. He was turning cruel and vicious. She wondered, "Is the Hitler Youth group responsible for the changes in Gerdie?"

Gerdie bragged about the Nazis making him 'upper rank' in his Hitler Youths group. He learned how to assemble a field radio, give speeches, be obedient to the Nazis and disobey his conscience and his gut feelings of kindness toward his fellow men. Gerdie realized that he was not getting along with his parents. When he reached the age of 17, he could hardly wait to enlist in the German Army. He thought, "He would be the German 'hero', once he became a soldier." However, he was just another foot soldier among many.

Before leaving for war, he visited Aunt Flory to say good bye. She was extremely saddened to see him go. As he turned to leave, he noticed his little nieces Rita and Elaine, who hugged him with all their might. He thought, "They are so cute and cuddly, but they are half-Jews and don't count." He never returned to see his parents, aunt, uncle or them again.

Being a soldier at such a young age caused Gerdie to feel inferior. The older soldiers ordered him around. He had to run errands, carry heavy equipment and felt less of a man doing the dirtiest work, the work other soldiers did not want to do. Most of the soldiers were arrogant, selfish and showed no mercy or feelings. Gerdie felt he had no one to talk with and he was comfortable living outdoors in the fox holes, he dug, under all types of weather and war conditions.

His life was literally a mess. It was fearful, dirty, cold and painful, rather than the 'heroic' image, he thought it would be. He saw the injustice his army caused against the poor village people of Poland and Czechoslovakia. He saw his army plundering and burning

entire villages, leaving fires, crying children and women, and dying men behind. He could see the villagers' fear in their eyes. He wanted to help them, but knew he had to be the tough soldier, who took rather than gave to others. He had to constantly tell himself, "They are our enemy.", even though they were unarmed, poor, and helpless. He knew he had to act strong, and be insensitive, and take with force, sometimes by killing another human being. He was not proud of himself anymore.

The fall weather was wet, dreary and cold, especially so when he was laying in the mud waiting to attack a village. There was no heat nor warm food to enjoy. Often he went without any meal at all. Sometimes he had only a piece of chocolate for nourishment. He was sick of the war, but could not quit. He would be considered a traitor by his own people and would be shot.

The unsanitary conditions brought on a dysentery infection to Gerdie, as well as to some of his soldier buddies. The German Army set up a make-shift tent hospital, but it was useless. The cold weather, lack of enough nurses, and inadequate medication resulted in havoc and death.

He was dying of dysentery within his first year of war. He felt all alone in Czechoslovakia, in the middle of a war, so young, so innocent, so naive and so sick. He thought of his family, his aunt and nieces. He knew at last, war made no sense at all.

After Gerdie laid for several days in the muddy floored hospital tent, grievously ill and cold , with the noise of warfare surrounding him, he died a very lonely death. A death for the Hitler Youths group, a death for the adults, who were persuaded by Hitler's propaganda and intimidation. The adult soldiers were hardened and cared for no one. Their Nazi

insanity drove them to kill for 'gaining power', ruling other people and owning distant lands.

Gerdie at last realized that he was taken advantage of by Hitler and the Nazis. He never did receive the freedom of choice, speech, respect or love he was seeking. All he had was a little 'power' with his rifle. He could force people with his rifle to do most anything, to give him food or clothing, but not love.

The villagers he came in contact with in Poland and Czechoslovakia hated him and his army. The people threw hand grenades, tomatoes and anything else they could at him until they were shot. He was not the 'hero', he thought he would be. And now in the middle of this ugliness, strange land, and muddy fields, he was dying without a mother, aunt or sweetheart to comfort his last moments of life. He felt cheated out of his youth and adult life.

His mother, Edith, cried bitterly, when she was notified of her only son's death. Instead of blaming the Nazis for the war and her son's meaningless death, she blamed the Jews. The Nazis blamed the Jews for anything negative, Germany's poor economy, the poor job market, rationing of food, no clothes, and later the Allied bombings and the destruction to the cities. After all, it was easy to put the blame on the minority, especially when they are already being deported and persecuted by the rest of the country. The Jews could not fight back under the horrendously unjust circumstances.

Nevertheless, every family was afflicted with pain of one kind or another during and after the war. For Edith it was the loss of a son, whom she could never replace. Her up-stairs apartment was also bombed out, while she was lucky to be in a bomb shelter. After her husband died, she remained totally lonely and bitter for the rest of her life.

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CHAPTER 6 - SUMMARY

Often the reasons a war starts are related to events that happened long before the war began. This was the case with World War II. Therefore it is vital to understand the German and world situations in the times after World War I . After World War I ended on November 11, 1918, the Treaty of Versailles was signed by the Allied Nations and

Germany. The Allied Treaty blamed Germany for starting the war and demanded heavy reparations (monetary payments) be paid as a penalty. Germany's cities were economically devastated and physically in ruins. The people grumbled, "How are we going to pay, when we can't even feed our children?" There was no work, other than labor, to rebuild the country. What money there was, went to repay their war debt. Soon more and more people were discontented and out of work.

The new government was weak and many small political parties were started to oppose it. The people were looking for a 'scapegoat', someone to blame for their troubles. The Germans' believed that they were members of the "Aryan race", which they considered to be superior to any other group in the world. Since Germany had a long history of anti-Semitism (religious prejudice against Jews), it was easy to convince the German people to blame the Jewish people, who were a minority in Germany. If it were not for the Germans' belief that they were superior and their hatred of others, it would not have been so easy for a dictator, such as Hitler, to gain control of the both the government and the people.

In 1919 Hitler joined the German Workers' Party, which he used to gain power. Soon it became the National Socialist German Workers' (Nazi) Party, and Hitler became its president. In 1924 Hitler and his Nazi Party started riots in a Munich beer hall and in the streets. Hitler was arrested and sent to prison for five years, but he was released after only nine months. During his prison term, he wrote a book called "Mein Kampf" (My Struggle) in which he proposed to overthrow the German democratic government and get rid of the Jews, who he claimed were the cause of all the world's evil. He promised to enrich and enlarge Germany with jobs, pride and world power. Some people laughed at his crazy writings and thinking, while others were overwhelmed with enthusiasm for the Nazis.

In 1929, the Great Depression began. The economy of the world collapsed. In 1932, over three million Germans were out of work. More and more ordinary people and military and industrial leaders looked to Hitler for help, after all he promised to provide jobs and rebuild the country and German military power.

New elections were planned for March of 1933. Hitler wanted to make sure that the Nazi Party would win the election. So a fire was set in the government building by the Nazis. Evidence was falsified and the Communist Party was blamed and expelled from the German government. Another fire was demanded by Hitler to destroy all foreign, philosophy, psychology and intellectual books, which he considered 'Jewish inventions'. Hitler did not want the youths to reason 'why', but instead 'accept his propaganda and war without questioning'.

In the German elections in 1933, Hitler won 44 percent of the votes. He became Chancellor of Germany in the Nazi-National coalition government, under the Germany's President von Hindenburg. President von Hindenburg was not strong enough to challenge Hitler and so he permitted Hitler to have more and more dictatorial power.

Hitler immediately began to persecute the Jews and all people who opposed him. The first labor concentration camp opened at Oranienburg near Berlin in 1933, for those opposing the Nazis. Civil laws prohibited the Jews from working in the government. Even with only one Jewish grandparent, a person was considered a Jew. The Nazis gained power, through propaganda and fear tactics in streets and lecture halls. They became the only political party. If anyone objected or questioned Hitler's reasoning, his many SS (uniformed and plain clothed Secret Police) would beat and kick the person. Often the police would arrest individuals and groups who disagreed with them. They would interrogate, torture and deport them to a concentration camp. No one dared to speak up or rally against Hitler or other noisy, boastful, Nazi official. The public was forced to repeat

"Heil Hitler" (Hail Hitler) at all public meetings, schools and as a greeting on the streets. This was a show of confidence and unity to Hitler's regime.

At the same time that the Nazi Party was becoming strong, the new emperor of Japan, Hirohito was looking for land and power in China, and the Mussolini's Fascists, in the Italian government, were trying to create another Roman Empire. The three dictatorships later joined together and became known as the 'Axis' (axle of wheel). Most of the other nations, including the British, French, Russians, Canadians and later the U.S.A became known as the Allied Forces.

In September 1933, Germany signed contracts of friendship and nonaggression with the Vatican Heads and the Italian government. Germany withdrew from the League of Nations to escape investigation by the world. In 1934, President von Hindenburg's death conveniently gave Hitler complete leadership as 'Fuhrer' (Leader) of Germany and its Armed Forces.

On September 15, 1935, the German government passed laws (called the Nurenburg laws) declaring that Jews were no longer German citizens. They were banned from governmental and many other jobs and were not permitted to marry non Jews. In 1936, the Jews lost the right to vote. In 1938, Jews were no longer permitted to work as office managers, tourist guides, or real estate agents. Jewish doctors were longer allowed to be called doctors, just 'medical assistants'.

Treaties were signed and broken between Germany, Britain and other European countries. In 1938, Hitler marched into Austria, without a fight, after planting Nazi sympathizers in their government. Then claiming he needed more 'living space', he took western Czechoslovakia. Hitler's excuse was, "Some Germans were living in part of

Czechoslovakia since World War I, and were mistreated." Britain, France and Italy agreed to transfer that portion of Czechoslovakia to Germany.

Then on November 9-10, 1938 'Crystal Night' occurred. Mobs of Germans destroyed 200 synagogues and most of the Jewish stores. They arrested 20,000 Jews, then 'fined' the Jews for the damage the Germans caused. There was no justice, the police and courts were under Nazi rule. The newspapers, radio stations, and even the churches were controlled by the Nazis. By 1939, Hitler closed the harbors, so Jews could not flee. But very few countries permitted emigration prior to World War II.

In March of 1939, German troops invaded Czechoslovakia. Hitler met with no resistance. The rest of the world watched hoping that Hitler would be satisfied and would not invade any other countries. But on September 1, 1939, the Germans sent tanks and troops into Poland. Within five days Poland had been conquered. Allied countries were not ready to defend the countries invaded by Germans. But on September 3, 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany and World War II began.

The United States stayed neutral, while building up their armaments. During this time, the United States supplied Britain with food and military equipment. Canadian and Australian troops aligned with the British. Later The United States, Russia, and many other countries entered the war. The fighting spread over Europe, Asia, Africa, the near east, and many island nations.

World War II lasted until 1945. Many soldiers and civilians were killed and wounded. But the Jews, the Gypsies, the Slavs, the handicapped, and any civilians who opposed the Nazis suffered the most. For the Germans used their vast army and their secret police to murder these innocent defenseless people.

The Nazis built death concentration camps in Europe. The Jews, the Gypsies, and other prisoners were forcibly taken long distances, in railroad boxcars, without food or water, to these camps to be murdered. It was easy for the Germans to locate the Jews because most of the Jews were already forced to live in small areas, Ghettos, separate from the other people. All Jews were ordered to wear a yellow 'Star of David' on their outer clothes as mark of shame and easy identification.

Usually upon arrival to a death concentration camp, such as Auschwitz, the Jewish families were taken off the box cars of the trains. Loud music, from speakers, played to dull the new arrivals' senses of resistance and to cover up any screams or shots fired by the SS Nazis who met them. Then the new prisoners were ordered into single file lines and checked to see if they would be useful to the Nazis as 'forced laborers'.

The Jewish families were often torn apart, so the parents did not know what happened to their children or loved ones. If the Nazis did not need any women to labor for them, all the women and children were murdered by sending them into showers, that were actually gas chambers. They did the same with most men, only a few men were needed to do the labor. Then they cremated (burned) their bodies in large ovens and buried the remains in mass graves, to hide the evidence. The foul smelling, constant black smoke of the cremated victims escaped from the tall chimneys of the cremation ovens daily. But no one outside the camp was aware, nor cared about what was being burned. The Nazis' strict laws and enforcement offered no incentive for neighbors to investigate. Traveling was restricted and the concentration camps were in unpopulated areas. The camps were run by sadistic German soldiers and a few Jews as forced 'laborers'.

The Nazis used cruel torturous methods to kill: starvation, whips, guns, planted infectious diseases, medical experimentation on twin children and adults, and gas chambers to kill masses of people. Hundreds of people, sometimes thousands were destroyed within a day at such a camp. Those victims, innocent men, women and children were buried without ever having a chance to fight. There were enough concentration camps to accommodate all political prisoners and Jews. This was Hitler's 'final solution' in his war against the Jews.

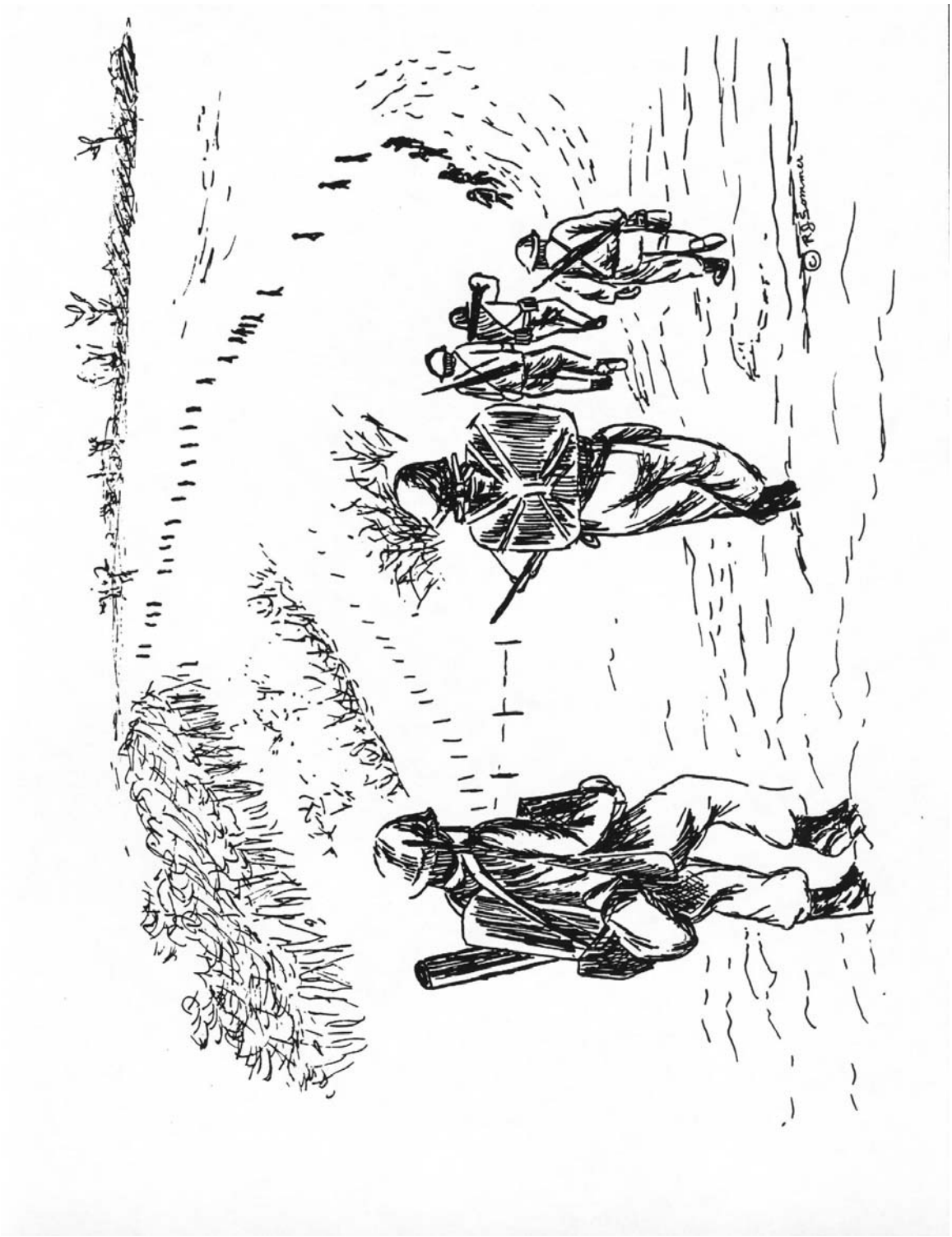
The Nazis used the Jews' money, belongings and businesses to build the German Army and pay for the concentration camps. The Nazis passed laws to legalize their 'horrors' and 'killings' of people and to justify their 'invasions' of other countries. Because a large number of persons throughout Europe were either anti-Semitic or indifferent, the Nazis were able to murder six million Jews, two thirds of all the Jews in Europe.

In January 1945, Auschwitz, Warsaw, Cracow, Lodz and Tarnow Concentration Camps were liberated by the Russians. U.S. and British troops liberated Buchenwald, Bergen Belsen, Nordhausen and Dachau Concentration Camps. The Allied troops were shocked at the inhumane treatment and murder committed by the Germans in the concentration camps. Those prisoners left behind were emaciated from starvation diet, disease, overwork, and punishment. The imprisoned's hair was shaven. They wore only thin striped pajamas as uniforms, even in the cold winters. They were demoralized daily by watching their loved ones, and others die brutally. Some of those who did not give up hope, and were able to work, survived.

Even though most people did not actively resist the Nazis, some very brave and caring people risked their lives by hiding Jewish people from the Nazis or by helping the Jews escape. This took a lot of courage because anyone who was caught aiding a Jew was also sent to a concentration camp.

The Jews in Denmark, a small country overrun by the German army, were saved. The Danish people secretly sent their Jews, in small ships, to Sweden, a neutral country. A Swedish diplomatic, Raoul Wallenberg, risked his own life many times to give safety to the Jews in Hungary. He bought buildings and flew the Swedish flag over them. Hundreds of Jews lived in safety in these buildings. Wallenburg also gave special Swedish passports to Jews, making it possible for them to leave Hungary and escape the Nazis. He was a real hero. Several others followed Wallenburg's example and helped some of the Jews escape.

Approximately 35 million people died because of World War II. Although many of them were soldiers (approximately 16 million), many of these people were innocent men, women, and children. Five million were political prisoners, dissidents, homosexuals, Gypsies, and Slavs. Some were civilians who were killed by bombs or bullets. Six million were Jews. Before the war, there were nine million Jews living in country villages, towns, and large population centers in Europe. Seven years later, ninety percent of them had



disappeared. Of the one-third that survived, some fled east to parts of Russia that were not occupied by the Germans, some went west to ports on the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea and ended up in the Americas, Australia, Israel, and Shanghai. Approximately 400,000 to 500,000 of those who remained in Nazi occupied Europe, survived in labor camps, fighting the Nazi with small partisan groups, hiding in the forests, passing as Christians with false papers, or hidden by brave non Jews. Less than 75,000 persons survived in the death concentration camps.

It is hoped that the new generation will be smarter than its parents' generation, and will have learned from history about the pain that prejudism and greed causes. Yet the saddest of it all, is that some of the new generation world-wide are seeking the old unfulfilled war glories of their forefathers today. They have not learned from history, about the grief, pain and sorrow that war brings. They continue to generate hateful racial graffiti, vandalize homes, threaten the minority peoples' peace, and desecrate grave stones of the minority, especially the Jews. The Neo-Nazis, Skin Heads, and other hate organizations, although they are small groups of misguided and confused youths, plant hate and fear in this great country of America and all over the world.

Some 150 or more books have surfaced to deny, that the atrocities, concentration camps or the war against Jews ever happened. They say, "The Holocaust survivors and Allied soldiers never witnessed any of the horrors mentioned, they are all lies." There are still many old concentration camps available to visit, many Holocaust photographs to view, and Holocaust survivors to witness that, "Indeed it did happen."

What happened cannot be undone, nor can the present young German generation carry the guilt of their forefathers. But their 'shame' can be relieved by doing good deeds for their fellow men. To deny their forefathers' bad deeds and lie about them, is in itself immoral.

To learn from the past atrocities and the history of man, we may improve our own behavior towards people. To ignore it, we deny ourselves of hope for peace on this earth.

Everyone paid a dear price for not being alert early enough to fight the evil German government before it become powerful and nearly destroyed the world. Hate can only bring evil, whether it is against nation, people or individuals.

There is an appropriate verse for all to remember, written by Pastor Peter Niemoller, a German clergyman: "When they came and took away the Jews, I was NOT WORRIED. When they took away the weak, handicapped, I was NOT CONCERNED. When they took away the Catholics and the Protestants, I REFUSED TO BE ALARMED. When they took away my neighbor, I was UNDISTURBED. But when they came for me, "I WONDERED WHO IS LEFT TO STAND UP FOR ME?"

Approximately 35 million people died because of World War II. Let us hope, it will never happen again. "NEVER AGAIN!"

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CHILDREN OF LOVE

Children are born with love, not hate
We teach them good from bad, but often too late.
We search for ourselves and evermore,
What is truth and how to set the score?

We must forgive ourselves and others,
Reconciliation is the key to love one another.
Even if the pain is great,
And we aim to reciprocate.

Kindness and love wins out over all,
People and animals no matter how big or small.

by Rita J. Mandel

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